



# The Storytelling God: Seeing the Glory of Jesus in His Parables

*Jared C. Wilson*

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Throw away your flannelgraphs...

The prodigal son. The good Samaritan. The treasure hidden in a field. Most of us have heard Jesus's parables before. Yet if these stories strike us as merely sweet, heartwarming, or sentimental, we can be sure we've misread them. In *The Storytelling God*, pastor Jared Wilson helps us to see how Jesus's parables reveal profound spiritual truths about God, humanity, the world, and the future.

Discarding the notion that Christ's parables are nothing more than moralistic fables, this book highlights how each one is designed to drive us to Jesus in awe, need, faith, and worship.

## **The Storytelling God: Seeing the Glory of Jesus in His Parables Details**

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**Jared C. Wilson**

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## From Reader Review The Storytelling God: Seeing the Glory of Jesus in His Parables for online ebook

### **Matt Pitts says**

The parables are not what you think they are. Not if you think they are meant primarily to tell us what to do. Instead, Wilson tells us, they are windows into the kingdom. They are meant to explode our understanding of reality and fill our vision with the reality of the kingdom of God.

I'm not sure whether Wilson covers every parable of Jesus. In fact I'm almost certain he doesn't. But that's not the point. That's not the kind of book he has written. *The Storytelling God* is not ultimately about the stories (parables) but about the God who tells them. Wilson's focus is riveted on Jesus and he wants to help you fix your eyes on Jesus too. For him the parables are a means to that end, and always have been.

But don't get me wrong. Wilson does care about the parables themselves and about rightly understanding them. In the first chapter he helps us understand what parables are, what they aren't, and their Old Testament background. And it becomes very clear as you read through the book that he has done his homework. He's read the books and commentaries about the parables, but this book doesn't read like one. His goal is not to comment on every verse or every aspect of every parable but to help us see Jesus and the gospel more clearly through them.

The heart of the book (chs. 2-7) looks at several of Jesus' more well-known parables such as the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, the Rich Man and Lazarus, and others. The next two chapters examine Old Testament parables (ch. 8) and Jesus himself as a sort of parable (ch. 9). But the last chapter (ch. 10) is perhaps the most powerful and encouraging of all as Wilson reminds us how the kingdom grows, how little kingdom growth has to do with us, and how much it has to do with God. After all, the parables aren't ultimately about us but about God and how he is turning the world upside down in order to set it right again.

*The Storytelling God* left me wanting to know the gospel more deeply. That alone makes it worth the read. May it do the same for you.

Note: I received a copy of this book from the publisher for the purpose of providing a review.

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### **Leesgoodfood says**

Well written...I read about half, then skimmed the rest. I suppose I didn't look at the subtitle closely enough; I didn't realize it was all about the parables. I may come back to it someday, but had too many other things I wanted to read, and not enough interest to keep going at this time (holidays).

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### **Jim Black says**

Some of my favorite, and most memorable, times are when you hear a great storyteller craft a yarn. Time seems to fly by as you hang on every word. Often you might not know where the story will go next. Although I have known many good storytellers, none were better than Jesus. He used parables to tell stories

that anyone could relate to and think they understand. Most of the time i believe the message did not occur to the listeners until after he was finished.

Jared C. Wilson demonstrates how Jesus not only used the parables to explain morals but, like all of the Bible, how they lead us to Christ.

Some of my favorite lines from the book:

The parables give us a direct portal to the kingdom of God being done on earth as it is in heaven.

The parables, as the wisdom of God, are aimed not only at the mind but also at the heart.

I would recommend that you follow the author as he takes a fresh look at the parables. Maybe he will open your eyes to something that has been in front of you all along.

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### **Geoff says**

I enjoyed Jared's book. There are plenty of detailed reviews here on GoodReads so I won't rehash what others have said. I will say that, as someone who has a real interest in the parables and has read lots of scholarly writings on them, Jared's writing shows the fruit of engaging with many of the best writers on parables (Blomberg, Ritterbos, etc.) but his purpose is not to present his own scholarly view. He wants to encourage us to appreciate the gospel more fully through the parables. He does this with clear writing, cutting humour, direct challenge and interesting and relevant quotes. I recommend this book.

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### **Josh says**

“Throw away your Flannelgraphs. They are flat and soft, and the story of Jesus is neither.”

In his newest work, Wilson looks at The Storytelling God, seeing how Jesus used parables to reveal Himself to His beloved. Wilson immediately confronts the misunderstanding of the parables as “sermon illustrations”, Confucius-says cousins, and shows them to be something much greater.

When Jesus teaches a parable, he is not opening up “Chicken Soup for the Soul” or a fortune cookie but a window to the hidden heavenlies. He is revealing a glimpse of eternity crashing into time, a flash photo of his own wisdom brought to bear. The parables give us a direct portal to the kingdom of God being done on earth as it is in heaven.

He continues,

There are two errors readers of the Bible make most often about the parables of Jesus, each a pendulum swing away from the other. The first error is to believe that the parables are simplistic religious illustrations, almost spiritual folktales. In this erroneous reading, the parables are read superficially, as moral lessons. The parables are of course fairly simple up there at the surface—some of them simpler than others—and there are clear moral lessons in

the stories. But the parables are more complex than that. On the other hand, there is another school of thought, equally erroneous, that would have readers poring over the parables as if they were some kind of Magic Eye hidden-picture painting. It is definitely possible to overthink the parables, by which I mean to read them with too much speculative scrutiny, ransacking every point and detail for every possible meaning it may have locked up, squeezing symbols out of symbols, bypassing the primary intent of the story for some imaginative concoction of biblical connections.

One of Wilson's main points is that the parables, first and foremost and ultimately and primarily, are about the Kingdom of God. He quotes scholar Craig Blomberg to support this assertion.

The central theme uniting all of the lessons of the parables is the kingdom of God. It is both present and future. It includes both a reign and a realm. It involves both personal transformation and social reform. It is not to be equated either with Israel or the church, but is the dynamic power of God's personal revelation of himself in creating a human community of those who serve Jesus in every area of their lives.

Wilson does not shy away from the fact that Jesus did not claim that His parables were told to illustrate or make His teachings easier to understand. Quite the opposite is often true. Those who have ears are told that they will hear, but for those who do not, the parables are meant to confuse and confound.

The parables in their power enlighten the elect to understand the parables in their content. At the same time, the parables that illuminate themselves to the effectually called obscure themselves to those spiritually darkened. The same sun that melts the ice, as they say, hardens the clay.

Wilson encourages his reader to avoid the temptation to see Jesus as simply a "spiritual" teacher, one who is of benefit with the ethereal stuff but of no real benefit when it comes down to brass tacks, the things of "the real world".

Jesus was the smartest man who ever lived. We have to get that through our thick skulls if we want to make a hill of beans' difference for the kingdom in this world. So often we think of Jesus as spiritual in a way disconnected from reality. Jesus is religiously idealistic, we reason, but not "street smart." Jesus knows how things ought to be, but he's not so incisive on how things really are. Jesus is a good teacher, but in the popular imagination pretty much a naïve one... We come to Jesus's teaching looking for tips on playing checkers, when all along he is playing chess... It makes total sense, then—real, actual, logical sense—to believe Jesus. He is no fool who believes the man who knows everything.

Wilson does not just talk about parables in broad generalities but also looks specifically at many of Jesus' parables, albeit at a basic level. While the scope of the text didn't allow for much in-depth study, many

parables were given a solid and meaty treatment, especially when considering the brevity of this work as a whole and the breadth of the topic Wilson takes on.

One area that Wilson spends a good amount of time on is social justice in the context of the Good Samaritan parable. This is an area that many in my circles have been concerned with and, according to Wilson and, more importantly, according to the Scriptures, for good reason. Wilson cautions the reader to be balanced and biblical when addressing the area of social justice.

We are pendulum people, constantly overcorrecting from one error into an error on the other side. So when some come along preaching a gospel of social justice, others will rashly deny the necessity of the thing in the first place. The consequence is a small gospel, scaled only to the individual. We've veered away from the cliff and right into a ditch on the other side, and there we lie with the half-dead man from Jerusalem.

Wilson then gives 7 reasons we must, as believers, be engaged in social justice. But he cautions the reader to ensure that the Gospel is the Gospel and give 9 reasons as to why we should guard against financial justice becoming another Gospel in our thought, rhetoric, and actions.

The gospel for the materially poor is not financial justice, although that is a valid implication of the kingdom's coming to bear in the world; it is, instead, the same as the gospel for the poor in spirit: eternal life in Christ Jesus. Why must we hold this distinction between gospel content and gospel entailments as it relates to poverty?

Wilson leads the reader gently and thoroughly through the topic of hell in a way that only a seasoned minister in regular fellowship with the Spirit of God could, even highlighting some oft-neglected aspects of this conversation.

Here is something provocative, dissolving of the pernicious dualism masquerading sometimes as Christian faith: hell does not belong to Satan. As the place of condemnation, it is a realm under our sovereign God's jurisdiction. Satan himself will suffer there, just like the rest of the condemned.

And so it is more precise to say in the long run that in the last day, God wins. He wins even now. He has never failed. Oh, we could say that in the end love wins too, so long as we are acknowledging along with the Bible that those who love themselves, and thereby hate God, will suffer eternal defeat in hell. Hate loses. Those, then, who love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength—and their neighbors as themselves—win. Infinitely. Irrevocably. Invincibly:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh . . . (Rom. 8:1–3)

Towards the end of the book, Wilson goes some places that I did not expect. He looks at the parables in the

Old Testament. Personally, I preferred the earlier parts of the book where Wilson dealt specifically with the parables in Christ's teaching, but I also suffer from some underlying, repressed, Freudian-level Marcionite prejudice in my thinking that causes me to favor the New Testament over the Old Testament, so take my preference for what it is worth. Wilson does however, address head on the difficulty of studying parabolic teaching from the Old Testament, especially in separating parables from types and not falling prey to allegorizing the text.

Identifying parables in the Old Testament is an intellectually arduous and frustrating task. The varied use of poetic forms, metaphors, symbols and types, the apocalyptic, dreams, and so on and so forth render the search as time-intensive as one would care to make it, depending on how "parable" is being defined. Certainly much of old covenant prophecy could be labeled parable (Hos. 12:10). Recall that the Hebrew word for parable (*mashal*) in the Old Testament is used for proverbs, stories, riddles, and similes. In addition, throughout the Old Testament, in both the historical and the poetical texts, we find types and shadows of Christ and his new covenant.

For our purposes, however, we will look primarily at some key stories that connect to the unfolding gospel story in the New Testament, and we will focus on intentional fictions meant to convey God's prophetic truths. That is, we will not look at historical events—things that actually happened—that may also be interpreted as parables of the kingdom (things like Noah's ark or water flowing from desert rocks or ravens delivering bread to Elijah), but instead at narrative or poetic stories that in a parabolic way reveal truth to or conceal truth from their hearers.

Wilson also looks at the "I am" statements in John's Gospel as parable and even looks at Christ himself as parable.

Strictly speaking, the "I am" statements found in the Gospel of John are not parables. But as we've seen, it is difficult to speak strictly about what fits into this genre in the first place. The scope of *mashal* seems quite malleable in the Old Testament. A less flexible but not inflexible scope persists into the New Testament. Some scholars and preachers will include the similitudes of Matthew 5:13–14 (salt and light) in the genre of parable. The metaphors Jesus uses there complement the symbolic mechanism of many parables. And while I have not made space in this book to include the detailing of every clearly identified parable of Jesus, much less every significant instance of metaphor and symbol found in the Gospels, the seven peculiar statements from the Johannine narrative demand inclusion because of the way they resemble the parables' subjects and object. That is to say, the "I am" statements are like the parables because they are complex comparisons that reveal the glory of God in Christ to those who have the ears to hear. They reveal truth to the hearts of some and confound the minds of others.....Jesus is himself a parable. Just as the parables' words may be heard but not heard, seen yet not seen, Jesus is the incarnate Word of God who is either received or rejected. Blessed are those who hear him and believe. Condemned are those who are offended by him and disbelieve.

He is a living parable because he is the inscrutable, eternal, ineffable God become a man, dwelling among men, tempted like men, sacrificed for men. As the parables contain the Spiritual power of awakening or deadening within stories of the human experience, Christ is the Spirit-conceived power of God undergoing the human experience. Like the other parables, this parable is deceptively complex. The parable of the gospel of Christ is simple enough that a child may believe and deep enough to sustain the life of a countless multitude of saints for all eternity. Here is a mystery: he became one of us that we might become like him.

This is probably the most ambitious section of the entire book and it is also the part, for me at least, that did not deliver as much as I would hope. There is always the looming possibility that I just missed it. It is not uncommon for me to get a good ways into a book and see my attention and effort start to wane and the same may have been true for this work. Regardless of whether I missed it or Wilson missed me, this section did not live up to the rest of the work for me. I may wait a couple of weeks and take another swing at it and see if we can connect better than the first time through!

Wilson's section on how we fabricate "Kingdom Growth" and attempt to be the Holy Spirit was excellent. His critique of program-driven, results oriented, idol-creating pragmatism is not new, but it is appropriate and insightful.

But the more we lead with law, the more we stifle real growth. The more programs we throw at our church, the more inward it becomes. The more strategies we bring to the table, the less Spiritual wisdom holds sway. As that Korean pastor said, "It's amazing what you can accomplish without the Holy Spirit."

We stay busy, brooding, building, asking God to bless our efforts, and then pat ourselves on the back when the Spirit works in spite of our ignorant attempts to quench him.

Time and time again we think we have the killer program, the system, the strategy, the secret for achieving Christian maturity and church growth, but the Bible tells us the Spirit blows where he wills, like the wind (John 3:8). We cannot generate a move of God; otherwise it would be called a move of us.

The emphasis today mirrors the emphasis of yesterday. Reach the cream of the crop, plant churches in the power centers, send missionaries to the cultural influencers, convert the CEOs and celebrities, and then you will see "trickle-down" kingdom expansion. Seminary professors warn ministers-in-training away from rural areas and some inner cities. It would be a waste of their talents. It is the same "winner's circle" evangelism strategy I remember from my youth. If you want to see the gospel take over your school, we were encouraged, you must reach the quarterback, the head cheerleader, and the student body president.

Of course, all of these power centers and power people need the gospel! We should not not take the message of salvation through repentant faith to them. But as a principle it seems to miss the tone of Jesus's ministry, which was largely on the outskirts, among the people on the fringes. Jesus is looking specifically for the forsaken. He is intentionally selecting the weak and foolish. And he builds his church not through entrepreneurial ideas or clever strategies but through his gospel.

What Wilson never fails to do in his teaching is present the Gospel, clearly and persuasively and distinguished from works. The Storytelling God is no different in this respect.

The gospel is the news of the work of Christ—sinless life, sacrificial death, bodily resurrection—which is to say, the gospel is not the news of anything we've done or can do. The gospel is also “the kingdom” that was coming in and through Christ's ministry, inaugurated in his life, death, and resurrection. But whether we use the gospel definition of 1 Corinthians 15 or the kingdom gospel framework of the synoptic Gospels, the gospel is still news of something that Christ has done or is doing. Therefore, anything that happens now and is done by us—including, but not limited to, what we might call social justice—is not the gospel message itself, but is the Christian's living as if that gospel message is true. I maintain that the gospel's content ends and the gospel's implications begin when we start “doing stuff”.

If you are looking for a book to give you a basic understanding of Christ's parables and to teach basic hermeneutics for parable study, this is more than a worthwhile read. Wilson has released a string of works that are a blessing to the church. *The Storytelling God* is just the latest and one of his best.

I received a review copy of this book through NetGalley

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### **Michael Boling says**

The parables of Jesus have long been beloved portions of Scripture. From the Parable of the Good Samaritan to the Parable of the Prodigal Son, these stories have provided believers with object lessons on the kingdom of God and the Christian life. Unfortunately, many have viewed the parables as little more than moral stories with a good message, a heartwarming tale of how to be good. Jared Wilson in his book *The Storytelling God: Seeing the Glory of Jesus in His Parables*, seeks to correct that notion declaring the parables are far more than nice stories with a happy ending.

Wilson rightly urges the reader to “Throw away your Flannelgraphs. They are flat and soft, and the story of Jesus is neither.” The parables of Jesus are more than moralistic tales. Conversely, as Wilson notes, “the parables don't just tell us about the true ways of life but shine into darkened hearts the way, the truth, and the life.” They are stories whose purpose and intent is to direct the reader to Jesus. They bring to life the kingdom of God and its purpose.

Beginning with a discussion on the Gospel of the Kingdom and walking through most of the more well known parables, Wilson clearly establishes his overarching premise that the parables are a declaration of the reality of the Kingdom of God and the tension that exists in this life between a world fraught with sin and the life that is found in Jesus. To a people filled with messianic fervor, Wilson aptly notes “The gospel of the kingdom is the announcement that Jesus the Messiah has arrived and has begun restoring God's will on earth in and through himself.” This declaration is rooted in Genesis 3:15 and weaves its way through the entire biblical corpus. In the parables, Jesus outlined just what this kingdom looks like, essentially what your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven is truly all about.

Wilson has a great gift of extrapolating the underlying message found in the parables, a gift that is clearly evident throughout this book. For instance, in his discussion of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, he avers “The story of the good Samaritan is a parable about justice and anthropology. It relocates a person's “center of the universe” by jostling his dearly held assumptions about the people in it.” Those who affirm this particular parable is simply a call to help our neighbor are correct but only in part. In reality, it is a commentary on social justice, what Wilson calls a rebuke “to the idea that the gospel of the kingdom has

nothing to do with taking care of the poor, sick, naked, or hungry.” Taking care of those in need has long been something God has called His people to be about doing and something He chastised them for neglecting. In the life of Jesus we find one who demonstrated his love by dying on the cross. There is no greater love than that. Loving our neighbor as noted in the Parable of the Good Samaritan means we must love our friends and enemies.

For those desiring to have a more holistic understanding of the parables, this is a book I highly recommend. Wilson does a masterful job of engaging the parables as a whole as well as the specific parables he discusses in this book. His constant focus is driving home the reality that the parables are more than nice childish stories that tell a neat moral lesson. They are far more than that given they are “smart bombs, full of explosive life to those who would embrace the power behind them.” For those who are willing to embrace their powerful message, Wilson’s book is a helpful guide to that end and is well worth your time reading and including as part of your bible study when you encounter the parables.

I received this book for free from Crossway Books for this review. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255 : “Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.”

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### **Amanda says**

Enjoyable and accessible book on biblical parables. Wilson doesn't look at all of Jesus' parables (that would be a much longer book). Instead, each chapter focuses on one parable and brings in related parables. The chapter on Old Testament parables was really interesting, especially since I'd never thought about parables in the OT at all.

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### **Sean Post says**

Jared Wilson has been as prolific as any pastor-theologian within the Reformed community over the last few years. This was my first encounter with his writing.

The concept of a book about the parables and the insight they provide into the Kingdom is appealing. Wilson exposites the parables well, essentially preaching their meaning. The book reads a lot like a sermon.

I struggled with the organization of the book and the individual chapters. Outside of "parables" there wasn't, in my view, sufficient connectivity between individual chapters and even portions of chapters. To be fair, Wilson certainly delivers on highlighting the glory of Jesus - as his subtitle promises - yet I struggled to track with his stylistic and organizational decisions.

My favorite portion of the book was the last chapter: The Unstoppable and Unfathomable Kingdom. In a variety of ways, Wilson describes how the Kingdom is so much bigger than our missional methodology, creativity, and innovation. Kingdom movement is not something that we can manufacture as leaders. Rather it is the work of the Spirit. Sadly, it is remarkable how much we attempt to do without the Spirit.

Looking forward, I will probably refer to this final chapter on the Kingdom. It is coherently practical in a way that surpasses the other chapters.

Also, I would recommend this book as a sort of application guidebook for the parables. Or, if you prefer, a non-academic (by Wilson's admission) commentary on the parables. It might prove helpful for someone preaching a series on the parables although not all the parables are covered in the book.

\*I was given a review copy of this book by Crossway.\*

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## Jon Kenney says

### About the Book

In our culture today we are consumed with stories. If you pick up the latest Seth Godin book, no doubt it will explain that a product or business needs to tell a story. If you want to be an effective communicator or speaker, then you must tell a story. Pastor, if you want to engage your congregation and keep their attention, start out your sermon with a story. Maybe you've heard and noticed this continuing theme throughout our culture as well. While this idea seems to be more prevalent than ever, it's also nothing new. Jesus frequently used stories or parables to communicate a much larger message with much deeper meaning than the latest digital product.

A generation of churchgoers grew up hearing the parables taught more along the lines of moralistic fables—illustrations of how to do the right things God would have us do. And they are that. But they are more than that. Some of these narratives are only a few lines long, but every parable, long or short, is fathoms deep and designed to drive us to Jesus in awe, need, faith, and worship. When we treat them as “inspiring tales,” we make superficially insipid what ought to be Spiritually incisive.”

Sadly, most of our exposure to the way in which stories market themselves today has changed our perspective in regards to the parables Jesus tells in Scripture. These parable are not self-help truths, they are much deeper than that. In his book *The Storytelling God*, Pastor Jared Wilson wants to clarify and define what parables really are. Too often we view parables are inspirational and meaningful instruction on truths that we can then practically apply to our lives.

In the parable to the sower and soils Jesus is telling us that we should be on the look out and be ready to judge the conversion of others. With godly intention of course.

The rich young ruler is really all about our unwillingness to be materialistic and pride. Instead we should be humble and abundantly giving of ourselves.

This list continues on. Instead of attempting to drag out our own interpretations, we need to understand that in every parable given by Jesus Christ the sole purpose was to teach us about the glory of Jesus.

### Defining Parables

Wilson rightly insists that before we can break down meaning, we need to define our terms. In this case, what exactly is a parable anyway? He suggests that we should view Jesus' parables as “wisdom scenes” in which the illustrative nature of the parable and the meaning allow us to view the parable in the proper context of revealing the kingdom of God. In this way it's not about the moral takeaway as much as, taking a glimpse into what God's reign looks like here on earth and the implications of that in our lives.

### The Implication

When we begin to understand this biblical perspective on Jesus' parables it quickly becomes apparent that while there is a moral takeaway from parables that we should look to embrace, the ultimate point of each

parable is that it points back to Christ as the fulfillment of the parable.

“Once upon a time, a king came to earth to tell stories, and the stories contained the mystery of eternal life.”

From a practical standpoint when Jesus speaks about the Good Samaritan, he’s implying while we should treat others well and show mercy to everyone, Jesus is the true and final Good Samaritan. He has shown the ultimate example of mercy in the gospel when we least deserved it. See where this is going?

My Takeaway

I found this book to be very enlightening and convicting on how I can so easily fall into trap of interpreting parables as a call to action in my life rather than reflecting on Christ. As Christ-followers we are to pursue becoming more like Christ, so when we turn parables into moralistic teachings or illustrations only, we remove the true context and reduce the nature of the gospel and God’s kingdom into a to-do list or self-help tasks.

There is much more I could have gone into with this book, but I think it’s a great read and great reminder on a rarely touched category of christian living and bible study.

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### **Ryan Reed says**

Jared Wilson is a fantastic writer and it’s apparent from the first sentence of the book. If he wrote a commentary of the windows 95 operating system, I’d give it a read and I’m sure that even that would be gospel-filled and Jesus exalting.

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### **Stefanie Kamerman says**

A while back, while listening to my pastor give a sermon on the Prodigal Son, I remember him making a comment about how Jesus has this amazing craft of creating a story at the drop of a hat. As mother, I wish I had that gift as well. However, Jesus is God after all.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading The Story Telling God. Scripture itself is so densely packed with information. There are so many nuggets of wisdom and truth in each word of the bible; it can be hard to understand with the naked eye. Jared Wilson sure has a gift of unpacking scripture, especially with the parables he analyzes in this book. It left me wanting to read what else he could take apart from scripture and relay back to me.

Wilson tells us “the central theme uniting all of the lessons of the parables is the kingdom of God” and he is so right. Wilson touches on many of Jesus’ well known teachings including The Pearl of Great Price, The Lost Son, and The Good Samaritan. While explaining the parables, Wilson dives right into what is at heart of them- the kingdom of God. God’s kingdom and economy are not at all like our earthly ones. Wilson gets right to point of that: “When you have Christ and his kingdom, you have everything.”

I respect the fact Wilson doesn't sugar coat the true meanings behind the parables. He makes it a point to say “when these oft-repeated stories from Jesus strike us as sweet, heartwarming, or inspiring in the sentimental sense rather than the Spiritual sense, we can be sure we've misread them.” In chapter six of his book, Wilson sets our sights on to the reality of hell and he uses the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus to help us further understand the ramifications of not accepting Jesus. This is where he doesn't sugar coat it-Wilson biblically makes the case why hell is real and how easy it is to get there. But he encourages that hell isn't the only

eternal reality. Wilson encourages his readers “preaching hell in the context of the gospel is not hate.” Of course the gospel he refers to in this quote is that of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ- our only way to a wonderful, eternal heaven.

Thank you Crossway for this opportunity to read and review this book. I am looking forward to adding this along side of my other books and recommending to others.

Disclaimer: I received a free copy of this book from Crossway in return for an honest review.

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## **Becky says**

I definitely enjoyed reading Jared C. Wilson's The Storytelling God. I selected this one for review based on this wonderful opening line: "Throw away your Flannelgraphs. They are flat and soft, and the story of Jesus is neither." Did it live up to that great first sentence? Yes and no!

In The Storytelling God, Wilson discusses parables from the Old Testament AND the New Testament, linking the two together when possible. After all, some of the imagery from the New Testament comes straight from the Old Testament. From the Old Testament, we spend some time with the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah. There are so many parables to choose from in the New Testament. Wilson does not use each and every one. And, he doesn't discuss them in order. He approaches them topically instead. So he pulls together all the parables that have a little something to say about justice, for example, and addresses them in a single chapter. I don't doubt this makes sense for the greatest number of readers, but, part of me was a little disappointed in the arrangement. That disappointment did not effect my overall opinion of the book, however! I am not that picky!

I had two chapters that I just LOVED above all the rest. One chapter was "Three Times Found" which focuses on Luke 15. The other chapter was "Jesus the Living Parable" which focused on the seven "I Am" statements from the gospel of John. My third favorite chapter, and, yes, I think it's worth the special mention, was "The Dreadfulness of Death after Death." I loved this chapter because it was honest and bold. The message is very much needed today, I fear.

Overall, I would definitely recommend Jared Wilson's The Storytelling God. I found it accessible and relevant.

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## **Tung says**

This is the third book by Jared Wilson that I've read, and I plan to read the rest of his books. I appreciate his clear prose, his grasp of theology, his ability to explain theology with clarity, his old-school reliance on Scripture (a modern Christian writer who doesn't shy away from using Bible verses, what?!), and his very evident passion for Christ. In this book, Wilson examines the Biblical use of parables (hence the title). Wilson explains what they are and how they are used (primarily by Jesus). He lays out several main themes of the parables, tying different parables together to explain key Biblical messages (about the kingdom of God, having a God-focused worldview, the gospel, repentance and obedience, etc). He also explains the real meaning behind a number of the parables that are oft misunderstood or whose meanings are not what they are often portrayed to be (e.g. Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son). I found one chapter particularly interesting

where Wilson makes the case that the “I am” statements from the gospel of John essentially operate as parables. Overall, a solid read for Christians wanting a deeper understanding of Biblical parables. Recommended.

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### **James Fields says**

This book is forgettable. I write most of my book reviews a couple months after reading them. It gives me time to process what I've read and how well the author did at communicating it. In this case, knowing the review was coming, I've been racking my brain for the last two weeks trying to remember what it's about and I honestly can't tell you anything that isn't mentioned in the title: The Storytelling God - Seeing the Glory of Jesus in His Parables.

At this point, I only have vague recollections of learning somethings from it, but when I mentioned that I had a good impression of it to my wife, she said "that's not what you said when you read it." I gave it 4 stars on goodreads, which means I did have an overall favorable opinion of it when I finished it. 4 stars is kinda my code for a book that did quite well but had one or two issues, or perhaps isn't going to be my first recommendation on the topic at hand. Anyway, now that I've given you my initial "I can't remember this book at all" speech, let me dig into it and give you a more detailed review.

Jared Wilson writes about a number of Jesus's parables and what they tell us about Jesus. He centers on the idea that these are not just good moral stories, but are designed to drive us to awe, need, faith, and worship in Jesus. He writes in an approachable and human way helping you see truths that might have eluded you before. His writing is like having a conversation at the kitchen table. It feels warm and welcoming.

I can't say much more about it without rereading it more in depth. I think Jared does a good job of writing a approachable work, but as I found it so forgettable, it's hard for me to recommend.

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### **Adam says**

In typical Jared Wilson fashion, 'The Storytelling God' contains some really great one-liners and paragraphs. Wilson has a way of summarising ethereal concepts and profound biblical truths with humour and incisiveness. But, on the whole, this didn't deliver as I thought it would. Don't get me wrong, it was good, but I think at times it lacked a bit of clarity and focus. I would put this down to Wilson becoming unduly sidetracked by his desire to show how Jesus' calls for obedience were not in contrast to the free grace of the gospel. A prime example of this was the chapter on the Good Samaritan where Wilson spent a large portion of his time outlining 9 reasons why the social gospel is not the gospel. They were good reasons, to be sure, but to my mind, not entirely necessary. In any case, this still served as a solid introduction to the parables of Jesus.

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