

IN-DEPTH SUMMARY

The Parable of the Sower

The in-depth summary of each bible study is much different than the small group bible study that is laid out before the leader and the students. The small group studies are intended to be interactive, provide a learning atmosphere for students, and open discussions allowing for interpretations for what the gospels' witnessed. The in-depth summary is designed to help the leader with expansive information, much more than what is in the text notes found at the bottom of every bible page. An exhaustive search was completed on each verse to help the Leader answer questions that may come up during the study.

The Parable of the Sower is described by three of the four gospels: Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20 and, Luke 8:1-15. We will go into much detail about the Parable of the Sower and other information that is not usually described in the notes at the bottom of most bibles.

The parable of the sower is one of the easiest but most essential parables Jesus describes to the disciples and the great multitudes. The parable has four main parts. There are also several other smaller parables weaved into the story, as well as a fulfilled prophecy. Jesus is not just instructing the disciples, but the multitudes as well. Notice, Jesus is leading by example to the twelve disciples on how to be a good teacher of the Word of God. He is not teaching in secret but educating and enlightening openly in public to all who will listen. This parable demonstrates the response of how the human heart receives the Word of God. Jesus describes that person's heart's reaction to the seed's development on the different types of soil. It was common sowers or farmers would scatter the seed by hand over their fields. The seed would land on good ground, hard ground, stony areas, and areas where plants already existed. Jesus first provides the disciples with the story of the parable of the sower. He notices the disciples are not comprehending the parable's spiritual meaning, so He then continues with a more in-depth explanation and interpretation of the parable. To help the reader, here are some interpretations of what Jesus refers to:

The Sower	represents	Jesus/God
The Seed	represents	Word of God
The Soil	represents	The state of a person's heart
The Birds	represents	Satan, the devil or the wicked one

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For each parable, we will provide a greater detail and explanation.

1. The first parable Jesus talks about is the person with a hardened heart. (Matthew 13:4, Mark 4:4, and Luke 8:5) The wayside is ground that has been hardened by foot traffic of humans and animals. The seed lays there on top of the hard ground and does not penetrate into the earth. All three of them state the seed fell by the wayside, and birds devoured the seed. Also, notice in Luke's version, he includes the seed "was trampled down." Perhaps this is an illustration attempt to help the seed to be forced into the hardened soil. This by itself was not sufficient enough for the disciples to comprehend the spiritual meaning. Jesus goes into greater depth. (Matthew 13:19, Mark 4:14-15, and Luke 8:11-12) The sower is Jesus/God who is sowing the seed, representing the Word of God, in the hardened soil, which represents a person's hardened heart. The seed did land on the hard soil. All three also mention "they hear," so the person does hear the Word. The Word was heard by people whose hearts are hardened by sin. Matthew and Mark both state the word is sown in their heart. Jesus/God places the Word in their heart "sown," but since the person does not understand it, Satan takes advantage of the opportunity and immediately snatches what is sown out of the person's heart. Preventing them from believing in the Word and being saved. The birds or fowl represent Satan, the wicked one, or the devil.
2. The second parable Jesus talks about a person with a shallow heart. (Matthew 13:5-6, Mark 4:5-6, and Luke 8:6) All three gospels refer to the seed falling on stony places or stony ground where they did not have much earth or no depth of earth. Matthew and Mark illustrated when the sun was up, and they were scorched, while Luke writes the plant withered because of lack of moisture. Both situations are true when planting a seed in stony places or shallow soil. When the seed falls on shallow soil, it germinates quickly. The plant almost starts in survival mode. The plant will shoot up and obtain sunlight quickly because it was not planted very deep; concurrently, the plant will start to grow its root system to obtain moisture and nutrients. But because the roots do not, one, go deep enough to support the plant and two, do not find moisture, the plant starts wither. The plant is also scorched by the sun because the part of the plant above the earth is not supported, nor is it provided enough moisture to withstand the sun's extreme heat. Jesus here goes further in-depth about the person who has a shallow heart that hears the Word. Matthew 13:20-21, Mark 4:16-17, and Luke

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8:13) Jesus describes someone who hears the gospel for the first time and is enthralled in hearing something new or gratifying. They may even declare to be greatly euphoric and elated when hearing the Word. They receive “joy” because they are deep in pain with the sin they are carrying. They finally hear an opportunity to rid themselves of this pain and appear to embrace the Word. They find themselves in a place where there is an opportunity for peace, forgiveness, and compassion. They may even see this as the lifeline they have been looking for. Their anxiety diminishes. They will endure for a while, but once the newness wears off, they will have a real-life choice to make. But they themselves have no root, and since their hearts have not changed, they are not true Christians. This is when they realize they have not embraced the Word, there is no true happiness, there is no everlasting joy, and their sins are not forgiven. Since there is no love for Jesus or the Word, when trials or tribulation and maybe even persecution comes into their life, they fall back to the previous, comfortable ways and fall. Just as the rootless seed withers from the hot scorching rays of the sun.

3. The third parable Jesus talks about the person with a crowded heart. (Matthew 13:7, Mark 4:7, and Luke 8:7) All three gospels mention, after the seed grew, they were choked. Only Mark mentions the seed did not yield a crop. The seed grew among the thorns. The thorns crowded the young plants as they grew, using up the soil’s resources and creating shade, not allowing the plant to grow its full potential. Finally, the thorns were just too strong for the young plant and chocks it. Jesus goes into greater depth. (Matthew 13:22, Mark 4:18-19, and Luke 8:14) All three disciples describe the cares, riches, and desires the world provides. The deceitful lure of wealth and riches causes one to change the focus away from God and, instead, on one’s own pursuit of happiness. The ground is fertile. The Word of God begins to grow in the person’s heart. However, so does everything else. The seed that grows in the soil with the thorny plants is deprived of nutrients because the thorny bush’s roots leave the healthy plant destitute. Another word that is consistent among the three disciples is “choke.” The Word is literally choked out of a person’s heart by all the cares, riches, and pleasures of the world’s temptations. These people hear the Word and do not follow the path of Jesus. They are “of” the world. We are called to be “in” the world, but not “of” the world. The cycle of riches and pleasures of life can never truly fill the hole in the soul that one is trying to fulfill. The temporary satisfaction of

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happiness one receives when riches or pleasures are obtained just that, temporary. The soul is not being fed and cared for; thus, it is not satisfied. Leaving the seed or plant being choked continuously desiring more and more. Until finally, the plant finds no end but death.

4. The fourth parable Jesus talks about the person with a fruitful heart that received the Word of God. (Matthew 13:8, Mark 4:8, and Luke 8:8) The seed that falls on the good ground falls into soil that is rich, fertile soil and full of nutrients. The good soil prepares the seed to germinate fully into a healthy full-grown plant. As the seed begins to grow, showers and warm summer rays help the seed shoot up and develop into a young sprout. As the plant continues to grow without being harmed by other plants, predators, pesticides, or eaten, the plant starts to develop its buds, seeds, or fruit, that will yield its off-spring thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold. Jesus goes into greater depth. (Matthew 13:23, Mark 4:20, and Luke 8:15) Jesus describes this parable in three parts: First, one who hears the Word. Second, one who accepts or understands the Word. And third, the person then produces a crop or bears fruit. Let us go further in- depth on all three parts.
 - a. First, the one who has a fruitful heart hears the Word. This brings up a great question. How does one prepare their heart to receive the Word of God? To prepare our heart is very much like preparing the soil. We need to remove the brush, grasses, plants, rocks, old roots, and debris for the first step in preparing the soil. For our hearts, we need to remove all the active sins we know we are committing. This is not going to be easy because we have become comfortable in our skin and our ways of being in the world. However, this is a good first step. Recognizing what we are doing is sinful and wrong and actively making a change. The field is now ready for plowing. The farmer begins to till the soil making it loose. This increases oxygen in the soil and speeds up the decomposition of organic matter. Having a fruitful heart is having a heart that is prepared by the grace of God. The heart has been made ready to genuinely accept the Lord's Word without bias, prejudice, or a preconceived agenda.
 - b. Second, the one who accepts or understands the Word. This is where the Word of God takes root and grows. Both words are used, "accept" and "understand." Yes, one can accept the Word. However, it is best to understand the Word, its meaning and comprehend what is being delivered. To understand the Word, several steps should be taken. First

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and most important, pray. God inspired everything we read in the bible, so it only makes sense to seek his guidance. Next, read in context. To avoid misunderstanding the verse we are reading, read the whole section. Most bibles today separate sections in paragraphs to help readers see the section being read. Next, study the Word. There are many ways of learning a scripture, a passage, or a lesson. Read the footnotes below. Go to the references of another scripture that has a superscript letter next to the word or passage. Do a deep dive online of that specific verse.

- c. Third, and most important, is to put what you have learned into practice. This is how the thirtyfold, sixty, and one hundredfold is created. From just one seed, if cultivated properly, it will yield much more than its own worth as just one seed. We are called to do the same. As we grow in our walk with God, we will discover what our true calling is. For some, it is discipleship; for others, it is service. Whatever your calling, being a believer and being a good example. Think of your journey as water dripping on a rock. At this moment, you may be in contact with someone who needs to hear the Word, to hear there truly is hope, that they can be saved. That person may or may not fully understand it right now, but you are the dripping of water on the rock today. Tomorrow it might be someone else. Next week, it may be another person. Remember, we do not fully know or understand the complexities of the Lord's plan.
- d. Jesus then ends the parable of the sower and says, "**He who has ears to hear, let him hear!**" This is an expression often used by Jesus. Quite plainly, Jesus is telling us to "pay attention!"

The above section provides a comprehensive understanding of the "Parable of the Sower." The following material will cover the other supporting verses Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote about.

Why did Jesus Speak to them in Parables?

The "Parable of the Sower" was most likely the first or one of the first parables taught to the disciples. Why we say, this is because all three ask a question about "parables." Mark 4:10 "But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable." Matthew 13:10 "And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?'" Luke 8:9 "Then His disciples asked Him, saying, 'What does this parable mean?'" This may have been a change in His teaching style. If the

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disciples were witnessing previous teachings such as the Sermon on the Mount, this change would have made His teachings less clear. Jesus will explain why He is doing this in the following verses. First, in the book of Mark, Jesus states in verse 4:13, “And He said to them, ‘**Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?**?’” Jesus is talking specifically to the twelve disciples about the parable of the sower and is seeing their lack of comprehending and understanding of how they are receiving this information. Also, notice Jesus uses the word “will,” meaning there will be future parables. He did not use the word “did,” meaning past parables. Also, from Jesus’ perspective, the “Parable of the Sower” is plain and simple. Jesus is concerned that if the disciples cannot comprehend this parable, how will they interpret and understand more difficult and complex parables. Jesus now explains why He is speaking to them in parables. All three talk about the “mysteries of the kingdom of God/heaven. Matthew 13:11 “He answered and said to them, ‘**Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.**’” Mark 4:11 “And He said to them, ‘**To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables,**’” Luke 8:10 “And He said, ‘**To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given parables,**’” Some versions use the word “secret” instead of mysteries. The Greek word is translated as “mysterion.” The difference is a secret can be uncovered, but a mystery must be discovered. It also does not mean learning the mysteries are incomprehensible. The disciples were given the doctrines about preaching the gospel and establishing the new kingdom, which they had not yet comprehended. It was the disciples’ responsibility to preach the Word to the Gentiles and the Jewish community, begin His church and spread His Word to the rest of the world. Why are the mysteries of God’s kingdom given to the disciples, but not those outside, is it given in parables? Jesus explains the kingdom to the followers through parables because we could not have comprehended the same level of understanding of God and Jesus. Those that are too engrossed in earthly possessions would grovel about the concept of Jesus’ kingdom. They could not comprehend the truth. Jesus now explains why he speaks in parables by referring back to a prophecy of Isaiah that was fulfilled in Isaiah 6:9-10. Mark and Luke briefly cover the “**Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.**” However, Matthew goes in much greater depth in Matthew 13:12-17. Someone who improves their walk in Christ, when an opportunity presents itself, their relationship will be improved. But the one who does not have a walk-in Christ, “even what little he has,” will be taken away. The lesson here is they did not hear and understand the Word because their heart was wrong and sinful. Therefore, they may hear the Word but not comprehend the Word. They may see with their own eyes what is going on but not perceive the truth. They, in essence, had their eyes closed upon the truth. Jesus then speaks that their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes are closed. If they change from their ways and open their eyes and ears and understand with their hearts, Jesus will heal them. The only one that can heal or

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pardon someone from their sin is Jesus. Blessed are the disciples Jesus is talking to that their eyes are open, and their ears can hear. The disciples are empowered to understand the meaning of parables. Many of the old testament prophets only wished they could see and hear the Messiah. For in their days, they heard and foretold prophecies of the one who is to come.

Jesus Teaches by the Sea.

Matthew 13:1-2 “On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And Mark 4:1 “And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat *in it* on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea.” The sea was the sea of Tiberias.

Women Minister to Jesus

Luke 8:1-3 “Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve *were* with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.” At this time, Jesus was preaching the Word in the region of Galilee. The twelve disciples were with him: Peter, James, John, Andrew, Bartholomew (Nathanael), James the Lesser, Judas, Jude (Thaddeus), Matthew (Levi), Philip, Simon the Zealot, and Thomas. All three of these women were called out for being healed of evil spirits and infirmities. Specifically, Mary Magdalene had seven demons cast out by Jesus. Mary Magdalene was called Mary of Magdala, her hometown where she was from. She will later be at Jesus’ crucifixion and His burial. Many bibles point out she is not to be confused with Mary of Bethany. Joanna, the wife of Chuza, was Herod Antipas’ steward, also known as someone representing them in a country or providence. She was most likely in charge of household duties for the family. The third woman, Susanna, was being called out as being healed of evil spirits and infirmities. Not much further is mentioned about Susanna. Finally, it is mentioned they ministered unto him of their substance. All three women ministered or gave to Jesus from their own resources. They did not just hang around with Jesus and the disciples. Jesus and his traveling followers needed to travel from town to town. They would need a place to sleep, daily nourishment, and had to rely on other’s goodness.

We hope this in-depth summary of the Parable of the Sower was detailed enough for your search of what you are looking for.

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