

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: "The Parable of the Sower"

1. **What are parables?** A parable comes from the Greek word "parabolē" meaning "comparison." They are designed to teach some general truth. In Jesus' example, it was mostly spiritual truth. He did this for clarity, purity, instruction, and simplicity.

It is best to read in groupings to compare and contrast each Gospel's observations and interpretations. Read in blue: Matthew 13:1-3a, Mark 4:1:2, and Luke 8:4. Next read in red: Matthew 13:3b-9, Mark 4:3-9, and Luke 8:5-8. Next read in green: Matthew 13:10-14, Mark 4:10-12, and Luke 8:9-10. Next read in purple: Matthew 13:16-23, Mark 4:13-20, and Luke 8:11-15.

2. **What is specifically different in Mark 4:3? Which is not mentioned in Matthew or Luke?** Mark states with the exclamation, "**Listen!**" Jesus is boldly, stating, "Pay attention" Jesus will mention this again in the parable "**He who has ears to hear, let him hear.**" Mark 4:9. Listening and teaching are the messages Jesus is trying to convey.

The meaning of the parables and how do they impact us today.

3. **What is meant by the parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed."** This is found in Matthew 13:3, Mark 4:3, and Luke 8:3a, also in Matthew 13:16-18, Mark 4:14, and Luke 8:11.

Meaning: Jesus cannot articulate a more striking illustration of the man preaching the gospel than a sower who plants a seed in the ground for it to spring to life and bear fruit. The seed is God's message. Mark describes in it Mark 4:14, calling the seed "the Word," Luke expresses the seed in Luke 8:11 as "the Word of God." Matthew clarifies it the best in Matthew 13:19, stating the seed is "the Word of the kingdom." The seed metaphorically represents Jesus' good news of the kingdom of God. The man or "sower" represents God/Jesus delivering the message.

Today: As a seed starts to grow into a plant, so does the Word of God, and it begins to grow within a person.

4. **What is meant by the Parable: "Some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them."**

This is found in Matthew 13:4, Mark 4:4, and Luke 8:5, also in Matthew 13:19, Mark 4:15, and Luke 8:12.

Meaning: The seed represents people who hear the Word of Jesus, but they don't pay attention. These are people with a hardened heart. The birds represent Satan or the devil. Matthew refers to him as "the evil one," Mark refers to him as "Satan," and Luke refers to him as "the Devil." Satan represents the fowls in the sky who see the vulnerable seed easily be devoured, preventing "the Word" from taking root. Metaphorically the devil comes and takes away the Word from a person who does not either understand the Word of the Lord or cannot comprehend the Word.

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Today: These are people who hear the Word, and do not follow the path of Jesus, represent the seed that fell by the wayside. They are "of the World." We are called to be "in the world" but not "of the world."

5. **What is "by the wayside?"** By the wayside is hard ground that has not been plowed yet. There is no opportunity for the seed to be buried so it can be grown properly.

NOTE: Stony places. Notice how Luke adds in the verbiage "because it lacked moisture."

6. **What is meant by the Parable: "Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture."**

This is found in Matthew 13:5-6; Mark 4:5-6 and Luke 8:6, also in Matthew 13:20-21, Mark 4:16-17 and Luke 8:13.

Meaning: The seed that fell on rocky places represents those who engage with gladness. These are the people with a shallow heart. All three gospels mention the Word was received with joy. They receive something new and are drawn to it. But they do not root themselves in the Word. Their hearts are not changed when they hear the Word. When faced with challenges in life, hardship, or persecution, they stumble or fall away. Just as a young, rootless plant, it withers in the scorching sun and falls away easily. The sun represents the challenges or hard times.

Today: People who are attracted to the Word, the bible, Jesus, God, Christianity but give up when the going gets tough they represent the seed that fell on rocky places. It is not an easy road to commit to a Christian lifestyle.

7. **What is meant by the Parable: "Some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up and choked them."**

This is found in Matthew 13:7; Mark 4:7 and Luke 8:7, also in Matthew 13:22, Mark 4:18-19 and Luke 8:14.

Meaning: The thorns that grew into thorn bushes actually choke God's message. These are people with a crowded heart. People hear God's message, but they are focused and more concerned about getting rich or worry. They focus on life instead of the Word. The deceitful lure of wealth and riches causes one to change the focus away from God and on one's own pursuit of happiness. Wealth may provide temporary happiness, but it is not long-lasting, and the soul is not satisfied. Wealth possesses the desire to obtain more wealth, and to this end, there is only death--no wonder the thorns choke the Word.

Today: It is common to see people who are more concerned with what others may think, and they worry too much represent seeds that fell among thorns. Posting one's life on social media to display what an awesome life

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they have. Often, they are jealous or angry and focus on what other people have.

8. Sub-question: (Seeds that fell on stony places) **Why would the ones who hear the Word immediately receive it with joy?** The ones who receive the Word with joy do so because they have sinned, and they an opportunity for their sins to be forgiven. It offers them peace and salvation, and for a brief time, they feel happy and forgiven of their sins.

9. **What is meant by the Parable: "Some seed fell on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit."?**

This is found in Matthew 13:8; Mark 4:8 and Luke 8:8, also in Matthew 13:23, Mark 4:20 and Luke 8:15.

Meaning: 3 parts that take place here. The first one has a fruitful heart and hears the Word. Having a fruitful heart prepared by God's grace allows us to be open without bias or prejudice to hear his Word. Second, accept and understand the Word. To understand the Word of God, we should first pray. God inspires everything we read in the bible. Seek his guidance. Next, read in context. Read the whole section or paragraph to understand the message. Next, study the Word. Read footnotes, the references of another scripture with the superscript letter next to the word or passage. The third and most important is to put what you have learned into practice. This is to bear fruit.

Today: People who hear Jesus' message and live by it and practice every day.

10. **What is meant by "some thirtyfold, some sixty and some a hundred."?** This means the seed was produced to its full potential. Some grains will yield a range of 12 to 1500 grains. However, it was usually 30:1, or up to 60:1. 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 discover our true calling. For some, it is discipleship; for others, it is service. 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.

11. **What is meant by "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"** Jesus uses this expression frequently. It is everyone's duty to pay attention to what is spoken.

12. **What does Jesus mean when he states, "To you, it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God?"** Mark 4:11, Some versions use the word "secret" instead of mysteries. The Greek

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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.

The mysteries of heaven (there are many more than these):

1. 1 Peter 3:18: Jesus was to die on the cross for our sins.
 2. Matthew 25:31-36: Jesus spells out what he will do at judgment time.
 3. Colossians 1:25-27: Another mystery of the kingdom of heaven is Jesus is in us, and we are inside Jesus.
 4. Ephesians 5:22-33: Another mystery we the people are the bride and Jesus is the bridegroom.
 5. Luke 10:25-37: **How to inherit eternal life?** The good Samaritan. This was an important message the disciples had to go out and teach the gospel.
13. In Matthew 13:11, Mark 4:11, Luke 8:10: **Why are the mysteries of the kingdom of God given to the disciples but not to those who are outside? It is given in parables.** They were too engrossed in earthly possessions and groveled too much about the concept of Jesus' kingdom. They could not comprehend the truth. Jesus explains the kingdom to the followers through parables because we could not have comprehended the same level of understanding of God as Jesus. It is also simpler for people to understand.
14. **What is meant by the Parable:** Matthew 13:12 **"For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."** (not covered in Mark or Luke): 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.
15. **What is the seed?** The seed is the Word of God.
16. Mark 4:13: What did Jesus mean when he stated, **"How then will you understand all the parables?"** Jesus meant this was one of the simplest parables to understand.
17. Bonus question: **Where is Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled in Matthew 13:14-15** **"Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing. And their eyes they have**

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**closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I
should heal them?"** Isaiah 6:9-10.