

The Parable of the Sower

The Parable

“Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times.” (Mark 4:3-8)

The Explanation of the Parable

Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the Word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the Word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the Word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the Word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the Word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the Word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things come in and choke the Word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown of good soil, hear the Word, accept it, and produce a crop – thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times what was sown.” (Mark 4:13-20)

A. The Variable and Constant:

The ground is the variable (or changing aspect), which represents the possible stages a person goes through in their pursuit of God. The seed, or God’s Word, is the constant that is applied in each situation no matter what the state of the ground.

B. The Purpose:

It is important for us, as disciplers to be able to recognize the various stages so that we will be capable of determining that person’s need as well as the next possible stage.

I. The Pathway is so worn and *hardened* that nothing can grow there. (vs 15)

“Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.”

A. The Hardened Person:

Just like an old beaten down trail or pathway in the woods, with ground so tightly packed that nothing has an opportunity for growth. These people have been worn down and hardened themselves to the point that they refuse to give the gospel a chance to impact their lives. It is important to realize that most people go through this stage at some point in their life. Sometimes people are hardened because they simply don’t believe, while others may be in a state of rebellion – but both cases simply suffer from a hardened heart that has been self-trained to allow no growth.

B. Dealing with the *Hardened Person*:

...”break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.” Hosea 10:12b (KJV). If you wanted something to grow on an old beaten down pathway with tightly packed soil, the only logical thing to do is to break up the ground. This should be our prayer for the hardened person, that the Lord break up the ground in their lives.

II. Rocky ground will receive a seed but allows no room for a root to grow. (vs 16-17) “Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.”

A. The Fickle Person:

This is the person who receives Christ gladly at first but does not get rooted and grounded in the Word of God. Then he/she falls quickly away from God. You can put a seed on a rock but you can't plant anything in a rock.

B. Dealing with the Fickle Person:

There is a narrow window of time that a new convert will remain excited in their salvation. It is during this time that the Discippler must share as many “Classic Christian Disciplines” as possible with this new disciple. If this person does not learn how to feed him/herself, soon the day will come that he/she will experience spiritual death.

C. Suggestions to aid in continuing growth/excitement of a new convert or someone renewing their walk with God.

1. Sharing this one-on-one will teach a new convert the dangers of being on stony ground. The effective discippler should beware his/her disciple of the “stony ground mentality,” as well as the remedies of being grounded in God through spiritual disciplines.
2. Celebrate their one-year spiritual birthday. Make it a goal (especially of people renewing their walk with God who have had a history of the “stony ground mentality”) for new converts/renewals alike to remain a rooted Christian for a solid year. Hold the person accountable to spiritual disciplines, each week reminding them of the time remaining until their birthday (a “countdown” of sorts will add excitement and encouragement). When the one-year birthday arrives, celebrate, and explain to your disciple that if he/she can make it for one year as a solid Christian, they can definitely do it for a lifetime.

III. Thorny Ground allows nothing to grow in it due to the *distractions* provided by the everyday occurrence of the “thorns of life.” (vs 18-19) “Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.”

A. The Distracted Person:

This is the person that has accepted Christ but allows too many things in their life that provide distraction from Him. These everyday distractions or “thorns” choke out the possibility of growing spiritual fruits such as, fruits of righteousness, fruits of the Spirit (“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Galatians 5:22-23), as well as the fruit of soul-winning.

B. What are these “Thorns?”:

1. The worries of life are a common thorn that chokes the ability of many college students’ to produce spiritual fruit. “But the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.” Mark 4:19. An example, would be a girlfriend/boyfriend. If your relationship with someone or the pursuit of such a relationship is a worry to you or (in case you are in denial) even the consistent topic of your conversations or dreams – you have a thorn that will choke your ability to produce fruit.
2. The above verse Mark 4:19 includes the thorn of “deceitfulness of wealth.” The pursuit of wealth is also a common thorn that stifles Christian growth. If you are consumed with the desire to gain, you have a thorn.
3. In addition, Mark 4:19 includes the “desires for other things” as a thorn. These are not always “bad” desires, but perhaps seemingly harmless things such as involvement in campus activities. This could include Band, Fraternities, Sororities, Athletics, ROTC, Intramurals, clubs, student government, a part time job, and once again a boyfriend or girlfriend, as well as being an RA. Do not allow these things to distract you from serving God. Instead, maintain a healthy relationship with God and impact some of your fellow students involved in these activities.

IV. The Good Soil is capable of producing endless crops. (vs 20) “Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop – thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown.”

A. The Faithful, Available, and Teachable God-Seeker:

This is what we strive to be: a hearer of the word, accepting of God’s Word, and producing fruit. This is every farmer’s dream to have good soil, this is what God intends for you to be. Consistently drinking in God. A person that is wholeheartedly in love with the God of the Bible. A person who makes time to be with God in devotion and prayer. “Good Ground Christians” produce multiple fruits.