

Calvary Chapel  Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

1st Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 8

The Parable of the Soils

The Parable of the Soils

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective This lesson will cause the students to look at their response to God's Word through the parable of the soils.

Key Verses

Luke 8:4-15—Main Teaching Passage

Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20 (Parallel Passage)

Memory Verse - Psalm 119:140

"Your word is very pure;
Therefore Your servant loves it."

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, Hebrews 11:1.

Take some of the seeds on your cart and put them in various places (on the carpet, on a desk, etc.). Then put one in the cup of soil on your cart. Ask the class which seed will grow the best.

In today's story, Jesus will use a similar example to talk about how we respond to the Word of God.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

The last couple of weeks, we looked at some of the things Jesus did. Today, we will look at something He said. Specifically, we will be looking at one of His parables. A parable is a made-up story that Jesus would use to show us a spiritual truth. Today's parable is called the parable of the soils. Jesus told the story of a farmer who went out to spread some seed. Some of the seed fell out of his bag and along the path, where some birds took it away. Some of the seed fell on rocky soil and grew for a little bit, but eventually it died due to lack of moisture. More seed fell on thorny soil. These seeds also began to grow, but then the thorns choked them and they died as well. Lastly, some of the seed fell on good soil and produced lots of fruit.

Later, one of the disciples asked Jesus to explain the parable. Jesus told them that the seed represented the Word of God. The seeds that fell on the path are people who, when they hear the Word of God, Satan takes the Word away and it never gets a chance to settle in their lives. The rocky soil stands for those who, when they first hear God's Word, respond with joy and excitement. However, they have no roots, so when temptations come, they fall away. The third soil represents those who hear the Word and begin to grow, but the things of the world keep them from ever reaching full maturity. Finally, the fourth soil is those who hear God's Word, obey, and become mature.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK

In today's story, Jesus uses a parable to show us a spiritual truth. These parables can be compared to stories we tell today, such as the story of the tortoise and the hare. That story uses the fictional tale of a turtle and rabbit in a race to make a point: slow and steady wins the race. Jesus used parables much in the same way to demonstrate spiritual reality.

When we read the parable of the soils, we are supposed to critique our own lives to see which of these categories we fall into. How do we respond when we hear the Word of God? The first soil is the soil of total rejection. These are the people who have no desire to be a Christian. The minute they hear the name of Jesus, they are uninterested or angry.

The second group hears about Jesus, and at first they are happy. They respond with excitement and enthusiasm, but it all has no root. They do not settle firmly into a life of Scripture reading, prayer, and church involvement, and so when temptations and difficulties come, they fall

LOOK (Continued)

away. The third soil, much like the second soil, has a good start, and those who fall in that category might see some growth at first. However, surrounded by the cares of this life, they choose the world instead of God. They would rather have money, power, and possessions than live a life that honors God.

The final soil is the good soil. These are believers who hear the Word, believe it, obey it, and grow. Their faith and love for God increases over time and they mature into strong believers. The goal of this story is for anyone who finds that they are currently one of the other three kinds of soil should seek to be like the good soil. That means responding to the Word of God with faith rather than unbelief or doubt. It requires developing firm roots in their walk with the Lord. It involves avoiding surrounding themselves with the things of the world. Most importantly, a person who is “good soil” is someone who loves the Word of God. Therefore, if we want to be good soil, we need to read, believe, obey, and love all that God says to us in the Bible. While many people think the Bible is hard to read or boring, many times, the more people read it, the more they understand and come to love God’s Word.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize Psalm 119:140.

Review with the class the four soils and who they represent. Ask how we can be like the good soil and love the Word of God.

Pray: Thank the Lord for His Word. Ask Him to make you all good soil and give you a love for His Word.

Parent Question: Read Psalm 119:9-24 with your family and talk about what these verses say about the Word of God.

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Luke 8:4-15 by David Guzik

2. ([Luke 8:4-8](#)) The parable of the soils.

And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

a. **When a great multitude had gathered:** Jesus taught large groups at one sitting. He certainly didn't despise teaching smaller groups or even individuals, but on many occasions taught large groups. He drew crowds **from every city**.

i. [Matthew 13:1-3](#) and [Mark 4:1-2](#) tell us that this crowd was so large that Jesus taught this from a boat. The crowd pressed in on the shore, and Jesus could use the boat as an effective pulpit.

b. **He spoke by a parable:** The idea behind the word *parable* is "to throw alongside of." It is a story thrown alongside the truth intended to teach. Parables have been called "earthly stories with a heavenly meaning."

i. "The Greek *parabole* is wider than our 'parable'; in the LXX it translates *masal*, which includes proverbs, riddles and wise sayings as well as parables. Matthew uses it for instance for Jesus' cryptic saying about defilement ([Matthew 15:10-11, 15](#)), and in [Matthew 24:32](#) ('lesson') it indicates a comparison." (France)

ii. "It had a double advantage upon their hearers: first, upon their memory, we being very apt to remember stories. Second, upon their minds, to put them upon studying the meaning of what they heard so delivered." (Poole)

iii. Parables generally teach *one main point* or principle. We can get into trouble by expecting that they be intricate systems of theology, with the smallest detail revealing hidden truths. "A parable is not an allegory; an allegory is a story in which every possible detail has an inner meaning; but an allegory has to be *read and studied*; a parable is *heard*. We must be very careful not to make allegories of the parables." (Barclay)

c. **A sower went out to sow his seed:** Jesus spoke according to the agricultural customs of His day. In those days, seed was scattered first and then it was plowed into the ground. For the most part, you didn't know the quality of the precise piece of ground until after the sowing.

d. **As he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside... some fell on rock... some fell among thorns... others fell on good ground:** In this parable the seed fell on four different types of soil. Though this is commonly called *the parable of the sower*, it could be better called *the parable of the soils*. The difference is never the *seed*, but on the kind of *soil* it lands on.

i. **The wayside** was the path where people walked, and nothing could grow because the ground was too hard.

ii. **On rock** was where the soil was thin, lying upon a stony shelf. On this ground the seed sprang up quickly because of the warmth of the soil, but the seed was unable to take root because of the rocky shelf.

iii. **Among thorns** described soil that is fertile — perhaps too fertile, because **thorns** grow there as well as grain. The **thorns** choked out the good grain and did not make a productive crop.

iv. **Good ground** described soil that was both fertile and weed-free. A good, productive crop grew in the **good ground**. The crop may be a **hundredfold** increase to what was sown.

e. **He who has ears to hear, let him hear**: This was not a call for all to listen. Rather, it was a call for those who were spiritually sensitive to take special note. This was especially true in light of the next few verses, in which Jesus explained the purpose of parables.

3. ([Luke 8:9-10](#)) The purpose of parables.

Then His disciples asked Him, saying, “What does this parable mean?” 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 in parables, that ‘Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’”

a. **What does this parable mean?** The meaning of this parable wasn't immediately obvious to the disciples. Apparently, Jesus' use of parables wasn't as easy as simple illustrations of spiritual truth.

b. **To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables**: As Jesus used them, parables were more like puzzles or riddles than illustrations. Only those who had the right “key” could understand them. The disciples, who wanted the things of God, were **given to know the mysteries of the kingdom** — they could be spoken to plainly. But often, others were taught **in parables**.

i. **The mysteries of the kingdom of God**: In the Bible, a *mystery* isn't something you can't figure out. It is something that you would never know unless God revealed it to you. In the Biblical sense, one might know what the mystery is; yet it is still a mystery because they would not have known unless God revealed it.

c. **Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand**: By quoting this passage from [Isaiah 6:9](#), Jesus explained that His parables were not illustrations making difficult things clear to all who heard. They were a way of presenting God's message so those who were spiritually sensitive could understand, but the hardened would merely hear a story without heaping up additional condemnation for rejecting God's Word.

i. A parable isn't exactly an *illustration*. A good teacher can illustrate by stating a truth, and then *illustrating* the truth through a story or an analogy. But when Jesus used parables, He didn't start by stating a truth. Instead, the parable was like a doorway. Jesus' listeners stood at the doorway and heard Him. If they were not interested, they stayed on the outside. But if they were interested, they could walk through the doorway, and think more about the truth behind the parable and what it meant to their life.

ii. “So, that their guilt may not accumulate, the Lord no longer addresses them directly in explicit teachings during the period immediately preceding His crucifixion, but in parables.” (Geldenhuys)

iii. If you don't understand the *key* to the parable, you don't understand it at all. We can imagine what different people in Jesus' audience might have thought when He taught this parable with no explanation.

- The farmer thought, “He's telling me that I have to be more careful in the way I cast my seed. I guess I have wasted an awful lot.”
- The politician thought, “He's telling me that I need to begin a farm education program to help farmers more efficiently cast their seed. This will be a big boost in my reelection campaign.”
- The newspaper reporter thought, “He's telling me that there is a big story here about the bird problem and how it affects the farming community. That's a great idea for a series in the newspaper.”
- The salesman thought, “He's encouraging me in my fertilizer sales. Why, I could help that farmer more than he knows if he only used my product.”

iv. But none of them could understand the *spiritual* meaning until Jesus explained the key to them: *The seed is the word of God* ([Luke 8:11](#)). If you miss the key, you miss the whole parable. If you think the seed represent money, you miss the parable. If you think the seed represents love, you miss the parable. If you think the seed represents hard work, you miss the parable. You can only understand it by understanding the key: *The seed is*

the word of God.

d. **Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand:** In light of this, how blessed are those who *do* understand the parables of Jesus. Not only do they gain the benefit of the spiritual truth illustrated; they also display some measure of responsiveness to the Holy Spirit.

4. [\(Luke 8:11-15\)](#) Jesus explains the parable.

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock *are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.*”

a. **The seed is the word of God:** Jesus likened the word of God (we could say both spoken and written) to be like seed. A seed has enormous power in itself for the generation of life and usefulness, if it is received (planted) in the right conditions.

i. The idea that **the seed is the word of God** is repeated in the Bible. Paul used the idea in [1 Corinthians 3:6](#), and Peter wrote that we have *been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever* ([1 Peter 1:23](#)).

ii. “The preacher of the gospel is like the sower. He does not make his seed; it is given him by his divine Master. No man could create the smallest grain that ever grew upon the earth, much less the celestial seed of eternal life.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved:** As the birds devoured the seed on the wayside ([Luke 8:5](#)), so some receive the word with hardened hearts and **the wicked one** quickly **takes away** the sown word. The word has no effect because it never penetrates and is quickly taken away.

i. The **wayside** soil represented those who never heard the word with understanding. The word of God must be understood before it can truly bear fruit. One of Satan’s chief works is to keep men in darkness regarding their understanding of the gospel ([2 Corinthians 4:3-4](#)).

ii. This tells us that Satan is at work during the teaching and preaching of God’s word. Satan seems to believe in the power of God’s word more than many preachers do; he knows that when it is taught or preached, he needs to be busy against it.

iii. **Then** comes the devil; he is *punctual* in his work. The devil knows just the right time to come during preaching. He knows how to bring a distraction of some kind at just the right moment — or actually, the wrong moment. Sometimes the preacher himself provides opportunities for distraction. Sometimes accidentally a word or a story in the sermon triggers a distracting association. Sometimes the mind fills with yesterday’s and tomorrow’s checklist, or the after-church activities. Sometimes a cute child or clever whispered remark from the congregation does the job.

iv. **The devil comes and takes the word;** Jesus said that he actually does it, not only that he tries to do it. In this regard, the devil has *power*. He sees, he comes, and he conquers. If it were not for the opposing work of the Holy Spirit, *nothing* would happen at the preaching of the word.

v. **Takes the word** also shows the devil’s *purpose*. He is actually a pretty good theologian, and he knows that faith and salvation come to people who hear the word of God. He works hard to keep salvation and spiritual strength from those who might otherwise hear to good effect.

vi. Satan’s strategy gives some wisdom to us if we will receive it — that if a heart *does* stay in contact with the word of God, there is a good chance that repentance and faith will come forth.

c. **But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away:** As seed falling on the thin soil on top of the rocky places quickly springs up and then quickly withers and dies ([Luke 8:6](#)), so some respond to the word with immediate enthusiasm yet soon wither away.

i. They had good seed, they had a warm environment, they had a joyful reception of the word, and they received it eagerly. None of those things were the problem; they failed because the seed *lacked moisture* ([Luke 8:6](#)) and therefore had no root to endure the **time of temptation**.

ii. There was something that they did not have in connection with the spirit of God, who waters the word. "When we speak of spiritual dew, we refer to the operation of the Holy Spirit. When we talk of the river of the water of life, we mean those sacred things which come streaming down to us from the throne of God through the working of the Spirit of God." (Spurgeon)

iii. Spurgeon detailed some indications of this lack of moisture:

- Doctrine without feeling.
- Experience without humiliation.
- Practice without heart-love.
- Faith without repentance.
- Confidence without reservation.
- Action without spirituality.
- Zeal without communion.

iv. "We need the Holy Spirit; and if the Lord does not water us daily from the living springs on the hilltops of glory, we shall certainly die. So take heed, brothers and sisters, that you do not lack the moisture of the Holy Spirit's gracious influence." (Spurgeon)

d. **Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity:** As seed falling among thorns would grow the stalks of grain among the thorns yet soon be choked out ([Luke 8:7](#)), so some respond to the word and grow for a while, but are choked and stopped in their spiritual growth by competition from unspiritual things.

i. This soil represented fertile ground for the word; but the soil was *too* fertile because it also grew all sorts of other things that choked out the word of God. Namely, it grew **the cares, riches, and pleasures of life**.

e. **The ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience:** Some people are like the good ground, and receive the word **with a good and noble heart**. They **keep** the word, and thus bear fruit, thus fulfilling the purpose of the seed.

i. This soil represented those who received the word, and it brought forth fruit in their soil, and in generous proportion ([Luke 8:8](#)).

f. **Bear fruit with patience:** Obviously, this is the desired outcome, for both the farmer and the preacher. Yet it is wrong to receive this parable fatalistically, as if one said, "That's just the kind of soil you are or I am." Instead this parable is a challenge for every listener to, with God's help, cultivate the soil of their heart so that the good word of God has the best effect in their life.

i. We benefit from seeing bits of ourselves in all four soils.

- Like the **wayside**, sometimes we allow the word no room at all in our lives.

- Like the **stony places**, we sometimes have flashes of enthusiasm in receiving the word that quickly burn out.
- Like the soil **among thorns**, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches are constantly threatening to choke out God's word and our fruitfulness.
- Like the **good ground**, the word bears fruit in our lives.

ii. We notice that the difference in each category was with the soil itself. The sower cast the same seed. You could not blame the differences in results on the sower or on the seed, but only on the soil. "O my dear hearers, you undergo a test today! Peradventure you will be judging the preacher, but a greater than the preacher will be judging you, for the Word itself shall judge you." (Spurgeon)

iii. The parable was also an encouragement to the disciples. Even though it might seem that few respond, God is in control and the harvest will certainly come. This was especially meaningful in light of the rising opposition to Jesus. "Not all will respond, but there will be some who do, and the harvest will be rich." (France)

iv. Even more than describing the mixed progress of the gospel message, the parable of the sower compels the listener to ask, "What kind of soil am I? How can I prepare my heart and mind to be the *right* kind of soil?" This parable invites *action* so that we will receive the word of God to full benefit.