

## The Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-8)

1. Read Mark 4:1-8 and watch the video. What is a parable? Why is it about a farmer?

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. (Mark 4:1-3, NIV)

2. The Parable of the Sower is a well known parable in the Bible. Because both the parable and the explanation of it is recorded in three gospels, a good method of study is to examine all three accounts. Each provides different details that will help you fully understand what Jesus is teaching. What is the seed that was sown?

Listen then to what the Parable of the Sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom... (Matt 13:18-19, NIV)

The farmer sows the word. (Mark 4:14, NIV)

This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. (Luke 8:11, NIV)

3. What does the soil figuratively represent?

When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart... (Matt 13:19, NIV)

... As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. (Mark 4:15, NIV)

... and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, (Luke 8:12, NIV)

#### 4. What does the first soil by the path represent?

When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. (Matt 13:19-20, NIV)

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. (Mark 4:15, NIV)

Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. (Luke 8:12, NIV)

#### 5. What does the second soil on rocky places represent?

The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives 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. (Matt 13:20-21, NIV)

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. (Mark 4:16-17, NIV)

Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. (Luke 8:13, NIV)

#### 6. What does the third soil with thorny plants represent?

The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. (Matt 13:22, NIV)

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. (Mark 4:18-19, NIV)

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. (Luke 8:14, NIV)

## 7. What is the fruit?

But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. (Matt 13:23, NIV)

Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown. (Mark 4:20, NIV)

But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. (Luke 8:15, NIV)

The good soil represents the ideal hearer. This person hears the word, understands it (Matt 13:23), accepts it (Mark 4:20), holds it fast (Luke 8:15) and bears fruit.

In contrast to the hearer who is unresponsive to the gospel and message of the kingdom, the ideal hearer receives the good news; he is not hard.

In contrast to the hearer who receives the gospel but has very shallow belief, the ideal hearer understands the gospel and allows the message of the kingdom to take root; he is not shallow.

In contrast to the hearer with consuming worldly interests, the ideal hearer holds fast to the priority of the gospel and kingdom; he is not preoccupied.

**The Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-8)**  
**Teacher Notes**

Video Abstract (Author: Wild Stories About Jesus and Max7.org): This episode of WILD STORIES ABOUT JESUS retells Mark 4.1-8, highlighting Jesus' Parable of the Sower. This video is suitable for showing in schools, kids' clubs and churches and could be helpful for family devotions.

Again he began to teach by the sea, and a very large crowd gathered around him. So he got into a boat on the sea and sat down, while the whole crowd was by the sea on the shore.

He taught them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them, "Listen! Consider the sower who went out to sow. As he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it didn't have much soil, and it grew up quickly, since the soil wasn't deep. When the sun came up, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it didn't produce fruit. Still other seed fell on good ground and it grew up, producing fruit that increased thirty, sixty, and a hundred times." (Mark 4:1-8, CSB)

When you go through the questions, encourage discussion and explore the student's thoughts.

1. Read Mark 4:1-8 and watch the video. What is a parable? Why is it about a farmer?

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. (Mark 4:1-3, NIV)

Explain to the student what a parable is. A parable is a story that people can personally identify with which teaches a lesson. In Galilee, where there were many peasant farmers, the Parable of the Sower would be an attractive story as it teaches them about the Kingdom of God.

Divide the class into three groups of students. Assign each group one account of Jesus' explanation of the parable, and each group answers the questions of today's lesson using their assigned biblical passage:

Group 1 – Matthew 13:18-23

**18)** Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: **19)** When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. **20)** The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. **21)** 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. **22)** The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. **23)** But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." (Matt 13:18-23, NIV)

Group 2 – Mark 4:14-20

**14)** The farmer sows the word. **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. **16)** Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. **17)** 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. **18)** Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; **19)** 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. **20)** Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown." (Mark 4:14-20, NIV)

Group 3 – Luke 8:11-15

**11)** This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. **12)** Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. **13)** Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. **14)** The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. **15)** But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. (Luke 8:11-15, NIV)

2. The Parable of the Sower is a well known parable in the Bible. Because both the parable and the explanation of it is recorded in three gospels, a good method of study is to examine all three accounts. Each provides different details that will help you fully understand what Jesus is teaching. What is the seed that was sown?

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Ask each group to decide and share what words refer to the seed of their assigned biblical passage. Everyone of each group circles the same words on their own lesson sheet.

In Mark, the seed is "the word" (Mark 4:14). In Luke, the seed is qualified as "the word of God" (Luke 8:11), and in Matthew, it is further qualified as "the word of the kingdom" (Matt 13:19).

Ask the class: what does the seed represent?

The seed figuratively represents the good news of the kingdom of God, which Jesus was doing in calling for repentance and heeding His message of salvation. The long awaited kingdom of God is at hand (Matt 10:7).

3. What does the soil figuratively represent?

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Circle the words that refer to the soil.

Both Matthew (Matt 13:19) and Luke (Luke 8:12) indicate that the soil represents the "heart" of a person while Mark (Mark 4:15) indicates that it represents the whole person.

Explain to the student that the Jewish understanding of the heart is different from ours.

While we see the heart, emotion, and thoughts as separate, the Jewish perspective sees the heart as the seat of a human being's deepest convictions, beliefs and volitional will; the heart reflects one's true character.

4. What does the first soil by the path represent?

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Circle what Satan does. The hardened soil describes the person who does not understand the gospel or its truth. They may appear to be willfully disbelieving but here Jesus implies that they are victims of Satan. Perhaps a victim of Satan's deceit of worldview or philosophy. Satan is historically known as a deceiver (Gen 3:1-13), and prompts people towards ungodly behavior (1 Chron 21:1).

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Circle the words that cause someone to fall away. The rocky soil has little soil for a germinating seed to develop roots with. In symbolic manner, Jesus speaks of the person who hears the gospel and receives it with joy, but their belief is shallow and temporary as they fall away when persecuted. Satan is well known as an accuser (Job 1:6-11; Zech 3:1), and Jesus makes clear to His disciples that the person fell away, because he did not fully understand, believe or trust the good news of the kingdom when challenged by his peers or culture.

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Circle the words that represent the thorns. Matthew records "worry of the world" and "the deceitfulness of wealth", Mark matches Matthew and adds "the desires for other things", and Luke qualifies with "pleasures of this life." The deceitfulness of wealth refers to the seducing and enticing of the pleasures of life that supplant that displaces the priority of the gospel, the good news of eternal life.

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But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. (Matt 13:23, NIV)

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Circle all the words related to fruit.

Both Matthew and Mark speak of fruit in terms of quantity, but Luke speaks of fruit within the context of a person's character. This suggests that the fruit represents the quality of one's spiritual life. The parable reveals that the kingdom of God is much about the hearer's responsibility and about the importance of learning with one's whole will and obedience. Just before teaching the Parable of the Sower, He spoke of fruit in the contexts of words revealing one's character:

"Either make the tree good and its fruit will be good, or make the tree bad and its fruit will be bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you speak good things when you are evil? For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. A good person produces good things from his storeroom of good, and an evil person produces evil things from his storeroom of evil. I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matt 12:33-37, CSB)

The good soil represents the ideal hearer. This person hears the word, understands it (Matt 13:23), accepts it (Mark 4:20), holds it fast (Luke 8:15) and bears fruit.

In contrast to the hearer who is unresponsive to the gospel and message of the kingdom, the ideal hearer receives the good news; he is not hard.

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