

Jacob's Well

Lesson Title: Stories from the Savior—The Sower



Key Concept: Parables are stories with spiritual insights that have a practical application. The parable of the Sower is about our response to the Word of God: whether we listen and embrace it, or disregard and reject it.



Scriptures:

This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is God's word.
(Luke 8:11 *New Living Translation*)

The Sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.

(Luke 8:5–8 *New American Standard Bible*)

Context Scriptures: Matthew 13:10–23; Isaiah 6:9–10; Mark 4:13; John 1:11; James 1:22; Hosea 10:12



Lesson Thoughts:

Though the prophets and forefathers of Israel desired to see the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies, they did not come to pass in their lifetimes, and Israel was left waiting. Yet, when Jesus came to earth, his own people whom he came to heal and save did not receive and listen to his words (John 1:11). Jesus told his disciples, who *did* receive his words, that they were permitted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but for those with hardened, unbelieving hearts his truth would be concealed (Matthew 13:11–15). It was for this reason that he spoke in parables, “so that hearing they may not understand and seeing they may not perceive” (Isaiah 6:9–10).

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In this context, Jesus revealed to his disciples the parable of the Sower, the crown jewel of parables (Mark 4:13). He explained the results of the Word on human hearts: wayside soil is uncomprehending, rocky soil has no true depth, and thorny soil is distracted by the cares and pleasures of this life, which hinder growth. In contrast to these, good ground signifies an open and receptive heart, yielding a bountiful harvest. The sower does not evaluate the soil before casting the seed; it is up to the hearers whether they reject or receive the Word.

Listening is a challenge for most of us, as we tend to insert our bias, background, and prejudice into what we are hearing. And yet the Bible clearly states that we will be responsible for what we hear and *how* we hear (James 1:22). Jesus stated that to those who have understanding, *more* would be given (abundantly!), but to those who have not, even what they seemed to have would be taken away (Matthew 13:12). Those who are open-minded and listen to Jesus think, reflect, and experience transformation. Those who reject Jesus find his teaching irrelevant and lose what little understanding they have.

Where might we find ourselves in this parable? Are we wayside, are we rocky soil, or are thorns choking out the tender plants and fruit in our lives? The good news is that the Lord is merciful to all who receive his Word. With his help we can break up the dormant ground of our hearts and reap mercy, righteousness, and peace (Hosea 10:12). Who has ears to hear, let them hear!

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Where do you turn when you find yourself confused by or resistant to God's Word?
- 2) In the seasons of your life, how do you relate to the different types of soil in this parable—wayside, rocky, thorny? Explain.
- 3) The third type of soil was full of thorns. Can something that is good in your life become a thorn and choke out the Word of God? Give an example.
- 4) Have you ever tried to discern what type of "ground" someone's heart is before witnessing or sharing the Word with them? What were the results?

Next Lesson: The Wise and Foolish Builders

*Jacob's Well***Notes and Reflections**

- 1) Jesus told his disciples that they were permitted to know the mysteries of the kingdom. But others were told parables, “that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand” (Mark 4:12). Reflect on the awesome responsibility of the knowledge that God has given us. Consider how you can cultivate the Word of God in your life and receive more abundantly.
- 2) Look for opportunities to sow seeds (words of life) into the lives of your family, co-workers, neighbors, and friends. The Word does not return void!
- 3) Read Matthew 13 with fresh eyes and search for the connections between the seven “kingdom of heaven” parables: the Sower, the Wheat and Tares, the Mustard Tree, the Leaven, the Hidden Treasure, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Dragnet.

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Notes and Reflections, cont.