

## The Sower and the Seed

Free Car Wash. Free Baptism,” read Elder White. He raised his eyes from the flyer and looked at Kordell.

“It was my idea,” beamed the 13 year old. “Our youth ministry is going to wash people’s car and let them know they can accept Christ and get baptized.”

“The pastor hasn’t approved it,” said Sister Jenkins, sitting at her desk and serving as a guardian to the pastor’s closed office door. “I think there could be a few concerns about that.”

Kordell’s smile didn’t waver. “We have to go out into the world and serve people. That’s what the Bible and pastor say. It could be a way to bring people to Christ.”

Elder White returned Kordell’s smile. “You are so right. The church’s mission is to make disciples. I love your enthusiasm and commitment.”

“If pastor doesn’t think this is a good idea, we can come up with other outreach activities,” said Kordell.

“So, now you’re on the outreach committee,” Sister Jenkins said.

“No, ma’am,” Kordell said brightly, not catching the sarcasm. “I have to go. I’ll find out what pastor says later.”

“That idea has trouble written all over it,” said Sister Jenkins.

“At least Kordell has a heart that is surrendered to the Lord,” said Elder White. “I believe that young man is going to be fruitful in the things of God.”

- 1.** *What kinds of things have you tried to grow, either successfully or not so successfully?*
- 2.** *What determines success in what you attempt to grow?*
- 3.** *Why is it important to remember that all seeds have the potential to grow and reproduce?*

## The Sower and the Seed

*Matthew 13:1-9, KJV*

1 The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.

2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

*Matthew 13:1-9, NIV*

<sup>1</sup>That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. <sup>2</sup>Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. <sup>3</sup>Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup>Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. <sup>9</sup>Whoever has ears, let them hear."

Many times when Jesus told a story, He used cultural metaphors that would have been meaningful to His

original audience. In first-century Israel, agriculture was the primary economic engine.

Jesus described what was more common in the planting of grains like wheat and barley. The sower would throw seeds in a fan-like shape so that they would be as evenly distributed as possible. Since grain seeds did not have to be planted very deep to sprout, the sower could simply walk over the area he had covered to press the scattered seeds into the soil.

When the sower came to the edge of a plantable field, sometimes the seeds would fall in areas not conducive to growing—like the paths that often bordered farmlands, rocks that defined the boundaries of the fields, and the thorny plants that were often just left alone on the fringes of the farmable land.

The seeds that fell along the path landed on a hard trail, and birds would pick up those seeds. The seeds also landed on shallow soil on top of solid rock, where there was enough soil for the seeds to sprout, but no room for them to take root. So while these lasted a bit longer than the seeds on the path, the young plants withered in the hot sun.

The seeds among the thorns did better than the first two sets, but these new plants found themselves competing with the thorny weeds. The weeds pulled all the water and nutrients from the new plants, thus choking them out.

And then, the seeds that did best landed in nutrient-rich soil that would have received the moisture from the clouds, creating a safe environment for these plants to grow. Even then, some of these seeds bore more “fruit” than the others. This could have been due to differing depths of the soil or places in the land where the nutrients were better than others.

**4.** *What metaphor did Jesus use in this parable?*

**5.** *What were the different roles of the soil in this parable?*

## The Meaning of the Parable, Part 1

*Matthew 13:18-21, KJV*

18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

*Matthew 13:18-21, NIV*

<sup>18</sup>“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:

<sup>19</sup>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.

<sup>20</sup>The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.

<sup>21</sup>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.”

This is one of several parables Jesus explained, and He started with a call to listen. The seed along the path represents those who hear the message, but do not comprehend what it means, or they don't really care. Since the Word has no pull on the person's heart, Satan snatches it away.

The person represented by the seed along the rocky ground has a deeper, joyful reaction to the Good News, but when ridicule or life's problems come, their thin soil of belief cannot handle those concerns. and they fall away as they find out the Christian walk has turmoil and suffering.

**6.** *What was the meaning of the seeds grown along the path?*

**7.** *What was the meaning of the seeds that fell on rocky ground?*

## The Meaning of the Parable, Part 2

*Matthew 13:22-23, KJV*

22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

*Matthew 13:22-23, NIV*

<sup>22</sup>“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. <sup>23</sup>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.”

The third type of soil where the seed landed was surrounded by thorny weeds that blocked out the sun (and took the plant’s water). Thus, the plants became entangled with the weeds of the world. These people may see the Kingdom as not blessing them as it should (financially) and let their vain pursuit of wealth or the worries of the world stifle them. There’s no fruit on these plants.

The final type of soil is a rich environment for growing things that are not only good to eat, but help lives to flourish. What do the different levels of fruitfulness mean for a Christian? The fruitful Christian’s works must be love-driven. Also, the people who bear the most fruit in life seem to have found the intersection between what they care about and the needs God has for them to meet—using their gifts, talents, and abilities to minister fruitfully in the Kingdom.

**8.** *What is the meaning of the seeds that fell among thorns?*

**9.** *What is the meaning of the seeds planted in good soil?*

## Testing for Good Soil

Farmers and gardeners want to know how rich their soil is before they plant in it. According to the Kelloggarden.com website, "Rich, nutrient-dense soil is crucial to successful gardening. Signs of healthy soil include plenty of underground animal and plant activity such as earthworms and fungi. Soil that is rich in organic matter tends to be darker and crumbles off of the roots of plants you pull up."

Jesus also taught that the soil of our hearts should be rich to receive and grow His Word. Three components of good spiritual soil include *understanding, roots, and stability*.

**Understanding:** Good soil for the Word of God to grow in starts with preparedness. We must be ready and prepared to receive good messages that will help us grow in our Christian lives. That includes understanding what we hear or read. The evil one just might show up with counterfeit messages that we wrongly take in because we lack understanding. As Proverbs 4:7 says, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (KJV).

**Roots:** No plant survives without roots, and no Christian survives the trouble and persecution of this world unless he or she is rooted in the Word. Heartaches and sufferings are a part of this journey. Christians rooted in the Word know that and cling to the promises of the Word.

**Stability:** Healthy plants like healthy Christians are steady, secure, strong, and sturdy. In this life, worries come, but faithfulness to the Word and its Author will carry us through.

**10.** *How do you prepare to understand the Word before hearing it from His messengers or Scripture?*

**11.** *Do stability and rootedness describe your daily Christian walk? Explain your answer.*

**12.** *Do you have good soil that is producing constant fruit? Explain your answer.*

## Good Ground

If the soil is good, good things will be reproduced. The Gospel seed grows and flourishes in good soil, and we want to be the best soil possible in which to grow for the Lord.

► *What can I do better to become good ground for the Gospel seed to grow so that I can bring forth fruit and reproduce?*

### KEY VERSE

But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

—Matthew 13:23, KJV

“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.”

—Matthew 13:23, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of July 17 through July 23

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

**Mon.** Matthew 3:1-12—Preparing for God's Harvest.

**Tues.** Psalm 1—The Righteous Yield Their Fruit.

**Wed.** 2 Corinthians 13:1-10—Examine the State of Your Faith.

**Thurs.** Psalm 139:11-24—Search Me, O God.

**Fri.** Ecclesiastes 12—God Brings Every Deed into Judgment.

**Sat.** Matthew 13:24-33—God Will Deal with the Weeds.

**Sun.** Matthew 13:34-43—The Righteous Will Shine.