

Genesis 3:1 NLT - 1 The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

What is a healthy way to deal with doubts that arise?

The rocky soil represents someone without “deep roots” who falls away when problems arise.

Ephesians 3:17-18 NLT - 17 Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. 18 And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.

What does Paul tell us our roots should be anchored in?

In Matthew 13:22 we see the worries of this life choke out the fruit God wants to develop in us. How does Phil 4:6 tell us to counter those worries?

Philippians 4:6 NLT - 6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

WRAP-UP

Parables give us insight into God’s Kingdom. Some are easier to understand than others. But Jesus said those who listen to His teaching will gain more understanding, and so we will spend some time unwrapping the mysteries of parables this summer and looking for the treasures Jesus left for us in them.

MEMORY VERSE

*He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not."
-Matthew 13:11 NLT*

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

Challenge – Listen to a parable teaching each week by texting “story” to 805 979-2003.

The Sower Storyteller #1

INTRODUCTION

This Summer we will be looking at many of the parables told by Jesus. A parable is sometimes called an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus wanted to spread the word about the Kingdom of God. But his listeners came from many walks of life and had a wide range of receptivity to His message. In the parables He was able to use commonly understood situations which illustrated the truths of God to those who were seeking it. As we introduce the parables, we will see what Jesus has to say about why he teaches in parables and how the parable of the Sower relates to the Kingdom of God.

Ice Breaker

Do you tend to give people the short and sweet version of a story or are you a storyteller who gives all the details?

Key Passage

Matthew 13:11-12 NLT - 11 He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. 12 To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why Parables?

Matthew 13:10 NLT - 10 His disciples came and asked him, "Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?"

In Matthew Chapter 13 Jesus tells the parable of the Sower to a large crowd. When He finished the parable, His disciples asked, “Why do you talk to people in parables”? In our key passage above (Matt 13:11-12) Jesus tells them the answer. What did He say was the reason for teaching in parables? What two groups did Jesus differentiate in His explanation?

Many people were drawn to Jesus because He was well-known and He was performing miracles. However not everyone who came believed He was the Messiah. In fact, the religious leaders came in hopes of discrediting Jesus and often debated, argued, and accused Him in public settings.

Matthew 13:14-15 NLT - 14 This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah that says, 'When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend. 15 For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes-- so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.'

Jesus refers to the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa 6:9-10) in explaining why His parables aren't understood by everyone. Isaiah's prophecy was spoken when Judah rebelled against God and God declared He would cleanse the land of those with hard hearts and bring forth a new generation to follow Him. Knowing this helps us identify who in this crowd has little or no understanding of Jesus' parables.

How do you feel about Jesus teaching in a way that He knows some people will not understand? If He spoke plainly about the Kingdom of God, how do you think those people would respond? How does this demonstrate the tension between the sovereignty of God and the free will of man?

According to Jesus, if the listener is looking for deeper meaning it is revealed, but for those who are not interested in what Jesus was teaching, it was just a silly story.

What are some things we can do to allow the deeper truths of God's word to "sink into our hearts"?

2. Jesus Explains

On the surface, Jesus is telling the story of someone planting seed. It appears some of the seed does well and some doesn't for various reasons.

Matthew 13:3-8 NLT - 3 He told many stories in the form of parables, such as this one: "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. 4 As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. 5 Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. 6 But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. 8 Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

Simple enough. Maybe the moral of the story is to be careful how you plant your seed? Maybe not. Now for those who take this story literally it is simply good advice. But Jesus had another purpose in telling this story. It reveals spiritual truths about His Kingdom. And he explains that to the disciples.

Matthew 13:19 NLT - 19 The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts.

Luke 8:11-12 NLT - 11 "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is God's word. 12 The seeds that fell on the footpath represent those who hear the message, only to have the devil come and take it away from their hearts and prevent them from believing and being saved.

Based on these verses about the parable of the Sower, what is the seed? Who are the birds? What is the footpath or hard ground? Who is the Sower?

Matthew 13:20-21 NLT - 20 The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. 21 But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word.

In the second scenario the seed remains the same; God's Word. Who is the rocky soil? How do we develop deep roots? What does it mean to "fall away"?

Matthew 13:22 NLT - 22 The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced.

Once again, the seed is the Word, what are the thorns? What damage do they do? What is fruit?

Matthew 13:23 NLT - 23 The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

In the final scenario who is the good soil? What does it produce? What is a harvest?

3. Making it Personal

The parable of the Sower can be applied to those who hear the Good News for the first time (Luke 8:12). But is it possible that we can apply these same truths to ourselves at other times. Let's consider how this parable can apply in the life of a believer.

On the hard ground or the footpath Jesus said the evil one snatches away the word. How might this happen? One way this might happen is when Satan sows seeds of doubt just as he did in the Garden with Eve.