

more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them."

What we do with what we hear is important. We don't want to have the seed of God's Word fail to germinate in our lives. We don't want it to be dormant under the soil, hidden and unproductive.

What does it mean for us to listen closely to Jesus' teaching?

Mark 4:33-34 NLT - 33 Jesus used many similar stories and illustrations to teach the people as much as they could understand. 34 In fact, in his public ministry he never taught without using parables; but afterward, when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.

These verses tell us Jesus taught as much as the people could understand. This is an amazing statement. Jesus wants to teach us as much as we have the capacity to receive. How much more of Jesus do you want? Spend a moment in prayer asking God to increase your understanding.

WRAP-UP

We have been entrusted with the light of Jesus. This light can show others the way to God, but we need to display it where it can be seen and not allow anything to obscure that light. If we want to continue to grow in our understanding of God, we need to listen closely to Jesus' teaching.

MEMORY VERSE

In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. - *Matthew 5:16 NLT*

PRAYER (20 MIN)

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

Challenge – Read all of the parables in Mark Chapter 4. Consider what is similar in them and what is unique.

Parable of the Lamp-

Storyteller #5

INTRODUCTION

Jesus wanted to share the good news about the Kingdom of God. To do this, He often used parables, teaching through concrete, physical examples to illustrate these spiritual truths. In Mark chapter 4 we find several parables about seeds being planted. But after explaining the first parable of the farmer sowing seeds to His disciples, Jesus uses the metaphor of a lamp which was hidden rather than displayed. So, what was He referring to in this parable about a lamp? Let's listen carefully to what Jesus was teaching here and see if we can understand the parable of the lamp.

Ice Breaker

What light source do you use in your home when there is a power failure?

Key Passage

Mark 4:21-22 NLT - 21 Then Jesus asked them, "Would anyone light a lamp and then put it under a basket or under a bed? Of course not! A lamp is placed on a stand, where its light will shine. 22 For everything that is hidden will eventually be brought into the open, and every secret will be brought to light.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Understanding the Parables

Mark 4:11, 13 NLT - 11 He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secret of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders, ... 13 Then Jesus said to them, "If you can't understand the meaning of this parable, how will you understand all the other parables?"

We are blessed to have the bible available, along with so many sources of commentary and reference to help us understand what Jesus taught. But put yourself in the disciples' place. They heard Jesus tell the parable of the farmer sowing seeds and they asked Him what it meant. Jesus told them they were permitted to understand and proceeded to explain the meaning. The seed was God's word and there were 4 different conditions in the heart of the hearer (the soil) it might land on.

In the parable of the farmer there was shallow, rocky, weedy, and good soil. We might think this is a one-time event- one person is one type of soil and God's word lands there once. But what if each of us has changeable soil and each time we hear God's word we might receive it differently. What type of soil do you think the disciples were at this time as Jesus was teaching? Which of the soil types do you tend to slip into and what helps you to be the deepest soil type?

2. Revealing the Light

Mark 4:21-22 NLT -21 Then Jesus asked them, "Would anyone light a lamp and then put it under a basket or under a bed? Of course not! A lamp is placed on a stand, where its light will shine. 22 For everything that is hidden will eventually be brought into the open, and every secret will be brought to light.

Immediately after explaining the parable of the farmer, Jesus makes this statement to the disciples. His parable changes from seeds being planted to a lamp that has been lit.

What does Jesus say about the "light" in the passages below?

John 8:12 NLT - 12 Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

Matthew 5:14-16 NLT - 14 "You are the light of the world--like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Jesus is the light of the world, and His light has been placed in each of us so that we can bring light to the world. The purpose of the light is to illuminate the way to God.

What can keep our light from being effective in its purpose? What are some things that get in the way of our shining the light?

It is interesting to note that the word for lampstand (*lychnia*) is also used for the lampstand in the Holy Place in the Tabernacle and the lampstands in Revelation where John saw Jesus walking among the lampstands in heaven. We have been entrusted with a Holy and precious light to share with the world.

What promise does Jesus make in Mark 4:22? How does Romans 14:11 relate to this promise?

Romans 14:11 NLT - 11 For the Scriptures say, "'As surely as I live,' says the LORD, 'every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will confess and give praise to God.'"

3. Listen Carefully

When Jesus told the parable of the farmer sowing seeds in Mark 4:9 He ended by saying "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand." Then, when He quoted the prophet Isaiah, Jesus helped us understand what was happening as He taught.

Mark 4:12 NLT - 12 so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled: 'When they see what I do, they will learn nothing. When they hear what I say, they will not understand. Otherwise, they will turn to me and be forgiven.'"

Some in His audience saw but didn't learn anything or heard but didn't understand. Jesus knew this to be true by their actions; they failed to turn to Him for forgiveness. But those who had ears to hear listened and understood. That's what Jesus expected of the disciples.

Compare this to Mark 4:23-25 "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand." 24 Then he added, "Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given--and you will receive even more. 25 To those who listen to my teaching,