

VOLUME 9 | CSB

THE SON HAS TRUTH



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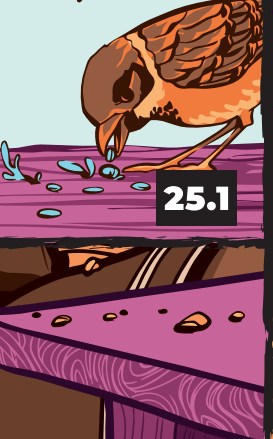
26.1 FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISH

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PUBLISHING TEAM LEAD

ALECIA BRYANT

Welcome to Volume 9! Jesus ushered the kingdom of God to earth—a kingdom so utterly unlike ours. As believers, we now live between clashing kingdoms: the temporary kingdom of this world and the coming kingdom of God, of which we're already citizens. To help us understand the way of God's kingdom, Jesus taught parables. Suddenly, our hearts become well-worn paths, rocky ground, weed-ridden earth—or fertile soil, a home where the seed of God's Word takes root and flourishes. Suddenly, God's kingdom becomes a tiny mustard seed; it's a treasure, a pearl of great price, worth everything we have to obtain it. In God's kingdom here and now, peace is reality—even in a small boat tossed around a raging sea. Healing is possible—even for the outcast, even for the despised, even for the hopeless. Invitation is open—even to lost sheep and to the ones outside the fold. To us.

A time is coming when God's kingdom will be revealed fully. Because we know our King—and because we are known and loved by Him—we can walk in hope until He returns. We can endure persecution because our King endured the worst of it. We can face physical pain and sickness because our King will heal us, if not here, there. We can face death and sorrow because our King entered into our suffering, wept over sin's effects, and redeemed us from the grave by lying in one made of stone. Our King offered Himself as broken bread and poured out wine, instituting a new covenant, where the Word is written on our hearts and the Holy Spirit seals us for eternity. Until then, we live with open eyes, alert and ready for Jesus's return. And when the world asks the reason for our hope, we can tell our story: "I was blind, and now I can see!" (John 9:25).

Alecia Bryant



**"I AM THE
RESURRECTION AND
THE LIFE. THE ONE WHO
BELIEVES IN ME, EVEN IF
HE DIES, WILL LIVE."**

JOHN 11:25

SECRETS OF THE KINGDOM

MAIN POINT.

We are changed when we allow the Word to take root in our heart.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus used parables to describe the nature of God's kingdom on earth. Word of the kingdom is spread widely but received differently based on the condition of one's heart. For those with hearts of fertile soil, the Word produces extraordinary fruitfulness, causing the kingdom to grow into all of the world. When Jesus returns, we will experience the fullness of God's kingdom.



PLANTING THE WORD

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Luke 8

GOD'S WORD IS A SEED

LUKE 8:4-10

4 As a large crowd was gathering, and people were coming to Jesus from every town, he said in a parable, 5 "A sower went out to sow his seed. As he sowed, some seed fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the sky devoured it. 6 Other seed fell on the rock; when it grew up, it withered away, since it lacked moisture. 7 Other seed fell among thorns; the thorns grew up with it and choked it. 8 Still other seed fell on good ground; when it grew up, it produced fruit: a hundred times what was sown." As he said this, he called out, "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen." 9 Then his disciples asked him, "What does this parable mean?" 10 So he said, "The secrets of the kingdom of God have been given for you to know, but to the rest it is in parables, so that 'Looking they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'"

GOD'S WORD GROWS IN GOOD SOIL

LUKE 8:11-15

11 "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12 The seed along the path are those who have heard and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13 And the seed on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy. Having no root, these believe for a while and fall away in a time of testing. 14 As for the seed that fell among thorns, these are the ones who, when they have heard, go on their way and are choked with worries, riches, and pleasures of life, and produce no mature fruit. 15 But the seed in the good ground—these are the ones who, having heard the word with an honest and good heart, hold on to it and by enduring, produce fruit."

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

We are changed when we allow the Word to take root in our heart.

Leaders: As you teach this week, emphasize that we can't produce fruit on our own, even if we check all of the spiritual boxes. Help students see the Holy Spirit as the One who empowers them to be more like Jesus!

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

GOD'S WORD IS A SEED

LUKE 8:8

"You often hear Jesus say, 'Let anyone who has ears to hear listen.' You might ask yourself the question, Who does not have ears? Nearly everyone does. But the saying suggests a person can have ears and not listen. . . . That's the thing about God's Word: You must work to hear it. You have to tune your ear to God's Word. You must train your appetite for it. There must be concentration in order to understand it. So Jesus calls His hearers to listen if they have ears. In other words, the Lord calls us to understand and obey—not merely register the sound of words."¹

LUKE 8:9-10

"These parables, while revealing spiritual truth to the sensitive and openhearted, also served to veil or conceal truth from others. This strange, paradoxical situation had been anticipated in the Scriptures, and the words of the prophecy of Isaiah were truly illuminating: 'When they look, they won't really see. When they hear, they won't understand' (8:10, quoting Isa. 6:9; Matt. 13:13; Mark 4:12). The parables, while offering insight and enlightenment to genuine inquirers, often served to confirm many people in their spiritual blindness."²

GOD'S WORD GROWS IN GOOD SOIL

LUKE 8:11-15

"These first three soils remind us of the Christians' three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. They all oppose God's Word. . . . A heart made of good soil provides the only antidote to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Verse 15 describes such hearts. We win the spiritual war of hearing when we hold on to the Word like a soldier trained never to lose or surrender his weapon. We do that if our hearts are honest and good; in other words, if we receive the Word of God for what it truly is—the very Word of God. We don't receive it to justify ourselves. We don't cut out the difficult parts. We don't pick and choose what we will believe. We receive it all with a good heart—with an intention to do good and to believe what is taught. We win the war for the Word when we look to bear fruit with patience (James 1:2-4). We're not trying to rush into maturity or skip the things that produce growth. We just steadily read, believe, and apply the Bible, and let patience have its perfect work in our lives."³



CONTEXT

At this point in the book of Luke, Jesus was traveling with His disciples and teaching the crowds. Some of the people in the crowd were Jesus's devoted followers; some of them only followed Him out of curiosity because of His miracles; and some followed Him because they were skeptical of Him and wanted to prove He was a fraud. Jesus used parables—relatable stories that help teach a truth—to help communicate with the people who were following Him and to teach them about the kingdom of God. The people following Jesus and listening to His teachings would have understood most of the imagery He used in these parables, forming a clear picture in their minds of the situations Jesus described. Many of Jesus's followers were farmers or understood farming, so they would've connected deeply with this parable's message about planting seeds. They had likely worked with each of the four types of soil Jesus described.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

The Gospel

The Bible teaches that the gospel is both an event and a story. First, it is an event that took place at a specific point in history: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the redemption of sinners (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5:21). Second, the gospel is the story of redemption that God planned since “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), running through Scripture and culminating in a restored and redeemed creation—a new heaven and new earth where sin, death, and suffering will never again plague humanity and where God's people will live with Him forever (Isa. 25:8; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21). The event and story do not exist apart from or in conflict with one another but together inspire us to a life of devotion and mission.

LEADERS' PRAYER

LORD, THANK YOU FOR REVEALING YOUR TRUTH TO US IN WAYS THAT WE CAN UNDERSTAND. HELP US TO SEEK TO KNOW YOU MORE AND TO UNDERSTAND YOUR WORD IN A WAY THAT HELPS US TO LOVE YOU AND THOSE AROUND US.



KICK STARTER

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know the average American takes in about **100,000 words per day**? That's a huge amount of information for our brains to process! We should be intentional with what we take in, ultimately focusing on God's Word to feed our hearts and minds.⁴

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

REMEMBERING THE LESSON

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **HOW MUCH OF WHAT YOU LEARN EVERY DAY DO YOU THINK YOU REMEMBER? IS IT EASY FOR YOU TO REMEMBER WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU LEARNED THAT COMPLETELY CHANGED THE WAY YOU ACT OR THINK?**
- **HOW OFTEN DO YOU APPLY THE THINGS YOU LEARN IN SCHOOL TO YOUR LIFE?**

A lot of information goes into our brains every day from what we learn in school, what we hear people say, or what we see on the internet. When we read God's Word, applying what we read can be difficult because we're reading more than just information. Scripture is "living and effective" (Heb. 4:12). It doesn't just fill our brains with facts about God; it grows our relationship with Jesus and transforms our hearts as we apply it to our lives.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Do you ever feel like you struggle to understand or apply the Bible? You aren't alone. But many of us use these struggles as excuses and never try to understand Scripture. We'll make strong efforts to improve in sports or hobbies, but we give up easily in the struggle to know and understand the Bible. Isn't this what the enemy would want, though—to deter us from even trying? Maybe you understand the Word but struggle to allow God's commands to affect the small and big pieces of your life. God's Word is like a seed; it takes root in our hearts and completely transforms us. But we have to nurture it. God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us because He wants us to understand His Word! The Lord promised not to leave us unfinished; He continues to sanctify us, making us more like Jesus until we are with Him in eternity (Phil. 1:6). You can find hope in the truth that God will continue to help you grow. As you seek to obey God faithfully and make efforts to know His Word, the Holy Spirit will strengthen you from the inside out, helping you understand and transforming you in the process.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

We are changed when we allow the Word to take root in our heart.

GOD'S WORD IS A SEED

READ LUKE 8:4-10

WHAT DOES A SEED NEED TO GROW? HOW IS GOD'S WORD LIKE A SEED? WHY DON'T WE ALWAYS SEE GROWTH?

Seeds need good soil, water, light. The environment either helps or prevents the seed from producing fruit. God's Word is a seed planted within believers as we read and study. The Holy Spirit uses the Word to convict us of sin, to help us grow spiritually, to show us God's character, and to give us wisdom. But this "seed" needs good soil—a receptive heart. If we don't see spiritual fruit—like patience, holiness, love for our enemies—then we must test the soil of our hearts. Can growth happen there? **God is faithful to produce fruit and make us more like Jesus when we receive His Word with receptive hearts.**



WHAT DO YOU NOTICE ABOUT WHERE THE SOWER SCATTERS SEEDS? WHAT DOES THIS SHOW US ABOUT THE WORD?

The seed fell on all types of soil, not just fertile ground. God desires for all people to hear and respond to the gospel. He graciously gives us His Word, reveals Himself through creation, and uses believers to share the gospel. **Though some will deny the truth, seeds of the Word and of the gospel are scattered in even the darkest, most hopeless places.** Every seed is capable of producing fruit. The gospel is the good news that all people can be saved from sin and experience new life because of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection.



WHY DO YOU THINK JESUS TAUGHT IN PARABLES? WHAT DOES THIS HELP YOU UNDERSTAND ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER?

Parables teach complex truths through relatable stories. Jesus often used parables to convey difficult truths about God's kingdom—truths that sometimes contradicted the people's expectations. This parable reflects the big story of Scripture. God has always desired to redeem His people, but most Jews believed this redemption was for them only. They misunderstood that salvation wasn't from Roman oppression but from sin. The Old Testament pointed to Jesus living, dying, and resurrecting to offer salvation to all who believe and put their trust in Him. In this parable, the sower scattered seeds everywhere, giving every opportunity for them to grow and bear fruit if they landed in the good soil. Standing in front of these crowds, Jesus knew that some wouldn't believe in Him and be saved, but He desired for each person to know Him. The gospel was difficult for Jesus's listeners to understand. The message was radical, and Jesus wasn't what they expected from the Messiah. **Rather than leaving them (and us) to figure it out on their own, Jesus taught in parables to make God's truth accessible. Even now, God shares His Spirit with believers to help us understand His Word and His heart.**

GOD'S WORD GROWS IN GOOD SOIL

READ LUKE 8:11-15



UNDERLINE THE FOUR TYPES OF SOIL. WHY DO YOU THINK PEOPLE RESPOND SO DIFFERENTLY TO THE WORD? WHICH SOILS DO YOU RELATE TO MOST?

Jesus pointed to soil to symbolize people's responses to the Word of God. The trampled path is the well-worn path of this world; these people hear the Word but never seek the Lord because Satan distracts them from truth. The rocky soil represents those who initially accept the Word with excitement but later turn away when life gets tough; they never move beyond emotional response, and their faith never takes root. The thorny soil symbolizes ones who hear the Word but are choked out by worries and riches and are not fruitful; they remain so embedded in the cares of this world that they cannot grow. But the good soil describes those who cling to the Word and produce fruit. **This imagery helps us consider the soil in our hearts—if we can absorb the goodness of God's Word and allow the Holy Spirit to produce spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22-23).**



WHAT "THORNS" KEEP OUR HEARTS FROM BEING GOOD SOIL?

Some of our "thorns" are external, like TV shows, social media, or music that distracts our minds from God. Other "thorns" can be internal—jealousy, lust, pride, or obsession with success. **Though the "thorns" that make our hearts hostile to God's Word may be different, the problem is the same: Living for this world chokes out spiritual growth.** The cares of the world—popularity, possessions, money, appearance—suffocate the seed of God's Word and keep us from growing spiritually.

WHY IS HAVING A HEART OF "GOOD SOIL" DIFFICULT? WHAT DOES "GOOD SOIL" LOOK LIKE IN SOMEONE'S LIFE?

We can't create good soil. The Holy Spirit transforms our hearts and makes them "good." But we can take steps to cultivate the good ground God creates in us. **Like seeds need light, water, and nutrients to grow, we promote spiritual growth by positioning ourselves in the light and walking away from sinful behavior; we nurture the seed of God's Word by walking with others who seek Him, making godly choices in our entertainment, practicing gratitude, and confessing sin.** Most of these spiritual disciplines go against our sinful nature, but as God's Word roots deeply in your heart, the fruit of the Spirit grows, making you more like Jesus. Though spiritual growth takes effort, God has promised to sanctify us and has given us all we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-8).

session 1 | Secrets of the Kingdom

WRAP-UP



WHAT HABITS CAN YOU BEGIN SO THAT YOUR HEART IS A PLACE FOR GOD'S WORD TO GROW AND PRODUCE FRUIT?

The truth about good soil is that it needs cultivating. If neglected, good soil can be overrun by weeds or ruined by poor soil from its surrounding environment. The most important truth is that all growth comes from the Lord! He sanctifies us and produces spiritual fruit in our lives. The first step you can take is asking God to reveal your heart's soil. Ask Him to help you cultivate good soil. What's your part? Spend intentional time reading God's Word every day. The Holy Spirit works through His Word, and reading it consistently helps us to know and love God more. **God does the transforming, but we must spend time with Him and allow Him to change us.** Consider choosing a verse to memorize; meditate on it each day and think about how you can apply it while you're at school, with your friends and family, or at events and extracurricular activities. Take a look at your entertainment; consider swapping to worship music to help center your heart and mind on Jesus. When you take steps to root God's Word in your heart, *He* will be faithful to grow the fruit!