

POWER OF GOD'S WORD

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 8:4-15

CONTEXT

Jesus traveled from town to town preaching the good news of the kingdom with His disciples. Jesus's preaching ministry was both the context and the subject of His parable of the sower. As Jesus traveled, He indiscriminately spread the seeds of the gospel far and wide. The four Gospels record a diversity of responses to Jesus's teaching: rejection, doubt, fear, joy, sadness, anger, and belief. In the parable of the sower, Jesus classified people's responses into four general categories as He illustrated the power of the Word and the danger of rejecting it.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.

As you examine Luke 8:4-15:

- Discover why Jesus taught in parables: to expose who truly was seeking truth.
- Recognize that we are transformed and bear fruit when we hear and trust the gospel.



TIMELINE

Jesus Appoints His Twelve Disciples (Luke 6:12-16)

SESSION STUDY:
Jesus Teaches and Explains the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15)

Jesus Heals Two Daughters (Luke 8:40-56)

Jesus Delivers His Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17-49)

Jesus Calms a Storm (Luke 8:22-25)

Daily Readings

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| ☐ Day 1: Luke 8:1-8 | ☐ Day 4: Mark 4:10-12 |
| ☐ Day 2: Luke 8:9-15 | ☐ Day 5: Mark 4:13-20 |
| ☐ Day 3: Mark 4:1-9 | ☐ Day 6: Psalm 81 |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

LUKE 8:4-10

IF WE TRULY SEEK GOD'S WISDOM, HIS TRUTH WILL BE REVEALED TO US.

Circle the four types of soil on which the seed is scattered. Then underline the phrases that describe what happened to the seed in each soil type.

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.’”

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

ILLUMINATION OF SCRIPTURE: Because of the vast difference between God's wisdom and ours and because of humanity's sinful state, human beings are incapable, on our own, of fully grasping spiritual truth without being aided by the Holy Spirit through illumination. When it comes to understanding the meaning of God's Word, Christians do not rely ultimately upon human reason in interpretation, nor do we rely solely upon an institution or body of scholars. Instead, a Christian's ultimate reliance is upon the work of the Spirit of God, who illuminates the Scriptures in the heart and mind (John 14:15-18; 16:7-15).



As crowds gathered around Jesus, He told them a parable about a sower who scattered seed. The agricultural setting would have been familiar to Jesus's audience, and the simple descriptions easy to follow. The sower and the seed remain the same in each example, but the condition of the soil changes throughout, producing drastically different results.

A path consisted of very hard, packed-down soil. The seed that fell there could not penetrate the soil and was trampled or eaten by birds. Likewise, neither the seed scattered on rocky ground nor the seed sown among thorns survived for long due to the constraints of their environments. By contrast, the final seed nurtured by good soil grew and produced fruit in abundance. After reciting the parable, Jesus said, "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen" (v. 8).

What does Jesus's exhortation to listen tell us about Jesus's desire for His audience?

At the conclusion of the parable, the disciples realized that though they heard Jesus's words, they did not understand Jesus's spiritual point, so they asked Him to explain it. Before answering, Jesus briefly explained the purpose and limitation of parables.

Jesus's parables contain within them nuggets of kingdom truth, but these mysteries cannot be unlocked merely by hearing or personally dissecting their component parts. Their wisdom must be given, and only Jesus holds the keys to their riches (Colossians 2:3). The disciples were granted this wisdom because they asked Him. Like Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8, Jesus called out and invited all to pay attention. The disciples came to Him in faith and were rewarded with understanding. The rest only heard a story about a sower scattering seed.

How does the fact that wisdom must be sought in a Person change the way we approach Bible study?



PERSONAL PREPARATION

LUKE 8:11-15

GOD'S WORD NEEDS TO BE HEARD AND INTERNALIZED FOR TRANSFORMATION.

Highlight how Jesus defines these parts of the parable: seed, seed along the path, seed on the rock, seed among thorns, and the seed on good ground.

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.”

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

“We win the [spiritual] war for the Word when we look to bear fruit with patience (Jas 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.”¹

–Thabiti Anyabwile

Key Concept: Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.

Jesus explained that the seed in the parable represents God's Word. A sower scatters seed with a purpose—he intends for the seed he scatters to germinate, thrive, and produce fruit. Although Jesus knew that not every gospel seed would be received, He preached with the expectation that some would bear fruit. For others, there would be obstacles.

Seed sown on hardened hearts cannot bring salvation, as Satan quickly snatches the truth away to prevent understanding and belief. The gospel offers abundant life, but the thief seeks to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). Seed sown on shallow hearts, though received joyfully, cannot endure for lack of nourishment (“no root”; Luke 8:13). Without the work of the Holy Spirit to transform the heart, shallow belief falls away during testing. Seed sown on a heart rife with thorns—“worries, riches, and pleasures of life” (v. 14)—is slowly strangled as worldliness and misplaced priorities prevent living faith.

Which of these obstacles to receiving the gospel have you encountered in yourself or a loved one?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Scripture teaches us that Jesus is the way to salvation, and following Him by faith with the Holy Spirit will lead to true transformation.

With such powerful obstacles at war against the gospel, it is a miracle that any seeds of faith survive to bear fruit. Yet that is exactly what happens with the fourth seed—this person receives the Word and holds fast to it, so that it endures and bears plentiful fruit. The difference lies in the soil of the heart. But how is it possible to have “an honest and good heart” (v. 15) suitable to receive God's Word and bear fruit? This requires the work of the Holy Spirit, who exchanges a heart of stone for a heart of flesh, enabling believers to trust God and obey with a heart of love (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

How should the expectation that some seeds will bear fruit motivate us to spread gospel truth?



FOUR SOILS, FOUR RESPONSES

Read Luke 8:4-15. Record what Jesus said each type of soil represented, any corresponding obstacles to faith, and how to overcome those obstacles.

THE SEED ALONG THE PATH	THE SEED ON THE ROCK
THE SEED AMONG THORNS	THE SEED IN GOOD GROUND

How should this parable encourage us as we share the gospel with others?

What “fruit” should we expect to see in our lives as believers in God’s Word?

Key Concept: Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.



HEAD

What are some ways we can keep God's Word in our mind and heart?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

As you read Psalm 81, pray that you would not have a stubborn heart that refuses to listen to God. Ask God to help you listen, to walk in His ways, and to be satisfied with the richness of His goodness.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HEART

What evidence do you see in your life that the Holy Spirit has given you "an honest and good heart"?



HANDS

For whom will you pray and share the gospel this week?

