

What Jesus Really Taught about Bible Teaching, Part 1

The first of three weeks on the Parable of the Sower! This first parable recorded by Mark is a **very very important parable**.

It’s the parable you NEED to understand in order to understand all the others. **Mark 4:13** "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?"

This is a parable about Bible teaching. So it’s **about something that everyone is responsible for**: to teach the truth of the Bible! This is maybe *especially* obvious to parents and grandparents and big brothers and older sisters and ALSO pastors and missionaries AND school teachers and youth workers and children’s ministries workers. But it’s true of us all.

No one should object because it is **about what to expect when we do what we are supposed to do**. The parable is the one we call “The Parable of the Sower” but more to the point it is a parable about seeds and the striking difference in what happens to them, depending on where they land. Kind of like looking at your high school yearbook and thinking about what different sorts of things happened to all those people you used to go to school with, only it’s way more amazing than that ... because we are talking about “seeds”!

It’s about seeds! What a stunning and unbelievable thing a seed is! Grain of wheat → stalk of wheat!!! Acorn → oak tree!!! Watermelon seed → watermelon plant, with watermelons! Then realize why the Lord is comparing the Word of God to seeds → a similarly stunning and amazing thing!

SO ... Jesus tells a story to help us understand what to expect when we pass on the truth of the Bible to people. **Mark 4:3** "Listen! A sower went out to sow." And as the story goes, six different things happened! Three are good news. Three are not good news at all! We’ll look at what happened over three Sundays.

April 19		
1. "Along the path" → <i>hard-packed soil</i>	4:4	15
2. "On rocky ground" → <i>shallow soil</i>	4:5,6	16,17
April 26		
3. "Among thorns"	4:7	18,19
May 3		
4.5.6. "Into good soil"	4:8	20

THIS WEEK: Two of the three unhappy results to be expected and planned for. AND NOW WE ARE READY TO START!
STARTING LINE:

- i) **God DOES intend us to be faithful “truth-communicators.”** This is the idea that is assumed in this story. It is laid out throughout the whole Bible in all sorts of ways: e.g. “Let your light shine”

The second starting idea is the big idea of the parable:

- ii) **God DOESN’T expect us “truth-communicators” to be totally successful but he does intend for his word to have success.** Not “totally successful” but some success? Right! **Isaiah 55:7-11** ... my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

The seed is the Word of God that God uses to change the hearts and the lives of those people. And this seed does exactly as much of that as God intends it to!

We are the people God uses to get seed to the soil. We should expect to successful but not “totally successful.”

This idea of “partial and not total success” shows up in the explanation given by Jesus for why he spoke in parables.

Mark 4:11-12 "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that "they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven."

Mark 4:33-3 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

NOTES:

Here are two things we need to know about the great assignment of communicating the truth of God's Word.

1. **Bible teaching being fruitless is a normal occurrence**

"Normal" because Satan is involved in the process... **Mark 4:4** And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

Mark 4:15 And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. In this parable, it is Satan who takes away the seed that is just lying there on the surface of the person's life! This is alarming! Satan is "prowling around looking for someone to devour" and he exerts his influence to try to ensure that the seed doesn't bear fruit. (Of course, besides the opposition of Satan there is our own tendency to disregard the Word of God: our "flesh" and we will see next week there is the opposition of "the world") So that perhaps we shouldn't be surprised when the Word has little or no effect but should be surprised when it DOES!

2. **When it comes to Bible learning, appearances can fool us**

e.g. The happy responses to Bible teaching! **Mark 4:5** Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil.

Some of the people we teach seem very "soft-hearted, but aren't! They are actually pretty hard-hearted, but have a little soft-heartedness. A little soil so they react positively to the truth: they receive it with joy! And WE quite naturally react with joy, too! But sometimes we are being fooled by appearances! There is only a little soil here. These people seem different from the first group because they react positively to the truth: they receive it with joy! **Mark 5:6** And when the sun rose it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away.

Mark 4:16-17 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; Then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. It sometimes turns out that a sudden great response is a product of shallowness, and the impact turns out to be circumstantial impact. The "warmth" of the soil is circumstantial! And when circumstances change, the seed, being practically rootless, gets scorched and withers and so comes to nothing.

ACTIONS:

a) **Just keep sowing!** Keep Bible teaching. The Word of God is as amazing as seeds. And it's an amazing privilege to sow it. If you have a special calling, then persevere in it! **2 Timothy 4:2** Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. So parents and teachers and pastors and youth workers and cell group leaders and camp counselors so keep at it. Use the Word. It's the seed to sow. It's the light to shine. It's the sword to wield. It's the hammer to break a rock in pieces.

Whoever you are, look to make the best use of the time! **Colossians 4:5-6** Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

b) **Don't be a solitary sower!** Co-operation is a good and necessary thing. **Mark 6:7** And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. Don't sow solo! Get some help! Hence, church ministries **and schools!** And not just the parents and the pastors and the teachers: all of the followers of Christ should be involved.

c) **Don't neglect yourself!**

1 Timothy 4:11,13 Command and teach these things... Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

1 Timothy 4:15-16 Practice these things, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

James 1:21 ...receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom... (And we shouldn't try to be solo in this either!)