

Roots That Go Deep

TEXT: Mark 4:1-20

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Matthew 13:1-9; Luke 8:4-15; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

KEY VERSE: Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.
— John 15:8

The parable of the “Sower and the Seed” is one that applies anytime God’s Word goes forth. The sower sows the seed, the seed is God’s Word, and the ground is the soul in whom the seed is sown. Within the four classes of ground discussed in this lesson, each person can be found.

RESPONSES

1. Let your students give their definitions of a parable. They should understand that it is a simple story or natural illustration used to communicate a spiritual truth, moral lesson, or religious principle. Matthew Henry called parables spiritual or heavenly things described in language borrowed from things of this life. A parable is a comparison between natural things with which men are familiar and spiritual things with which they are not so familiar.

2. Parables served a two-fold purpose. They revealed “the mysteries of the kingdom” to those who would know and treasure them. On the other hand, those who were insensible to spiritual things heard only a story which provided temporary entertainment.

3. Allow time for your students to offer their explanations, bringing out that this phrase refers to spiritual perception rather than physical hearing. Ask them to point out the difference between physical hearing and spiritual hearing. Sometimes people may hear the message of the Gospel with their physical ears, and yet not respond to it. Stress that the difficulty is not with the physical ears or mind, but with the heart. It is this issue with which the parable in our text deals.

4. The fowls of the air devoured it. Have your students define the *wayside ground*. Those by the wayside are “indifferent hearers who are spiritually deaf.” What tactics does the enemy use to prevent people from heeding the Word? He takes it away before it can take root. What would the remedy be for this situation?

1. What is a parable?

2. Why do you think Jesus sometimes used parables when teaching?

3. Jesus often said, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” What do you think that means?

4. What happened to the seed that fell by the wayside? How does that describe the spiritual awareness of some people?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. What happened to the seed that fell upon stony ground? What spiritual characteristics does the stony ground describe?

6. What happened to the seed that fell among the thorns? How does thorny ground parallel with the spiritual life of some?

7. How can we prepare ourselves to be good ground? Make a list of suggestions.

8. Do you think it is better to produce thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold?

9. Look up the references for the following Bible characters and write down what type of ground you think they represented. Be prepared to explain your answers.

- A. Saul — 1 Samuel 28:15
- B. Solomon — 1 Kings 11:4
- C. Belshazzar — Daniel 5:22,23
- D. Zacchaeus — Luke 19:6,8
- E. Judas — John 6:70,71
- F. Felix — Acts 24:25
- G. Paul — 2 Timothy 4:7,8
- H. Demas — Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:10

5. Your students should define *stony ground* as “unstable or emotional hearers.” Have your students make a detailed list from Scripture of characteristics exhibited by this ground (shallow, easily offended, lack of endurance, lack of stability under affliction and persecution, etc.). You may wish to refer your students to Matthew 13 and Luke 8 for supporting details. How can one guard against acquiring these undesirable characteristics?

6. The thorns sprang up and choked it. Your students should conclude that these are encumbered hearers. Their priorities were set up wrong. What are some specific cares of life that entangle people today? In what way are riches deceitful? How do they encumber? What can one do to insure that his heart will not become thorny ground?

7. Establish a circle response (Teacher’s Handbook, Page 34) to bring out the possibilities. One item that could start your discussion might be the importance of hearing during church (i.e. song services, testimonies, Scripture reading, preaching). How can our hearts be cultivated? watered?

8. Whether we produce thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold is not what is important; it is rather that we produce the best that we are capable of producing. See Colossians 3:23.

9. Following is a list of “soils” represented by each Bible character. Be aware that there may be more than one acceptable answer. Your students may interpret the verses in a slightly different way; for example, choosing stony rather than thorny ground.

- A. Thorny — The seed was received, sprang up, endured for a time, then was choked by cares of life. 1 Samuel 13:13
- B. Thorny — The seed was received but was then choked out by love of this world.
- C. Wayside — The seed trodden down, was never received.
- D. Good — The seed was received with understanding and yielded fruit.
- E. Thorny — The seed was received but along came a lust for other things.
- F. Wayside — The seed just lay there, and was snatched away by Satan.
- G. Good — The seed was received, kept, and brought forth much fruit.
- H. Stony — The seed was received with joy but had no root, so only endured for awhile.

YOUR WRAP-UP
