

**TEXT** Luke 8:4-15

**SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES** Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13

**OBJECTIVE** The students will be able to explain that to hear, to understand, and to bring forth fruit are the evidences of having a receptive heart. The lesson demonstrates that the individual has control of the receptivity of his heart.

**KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER** All my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. — Ezekiel 3:10

**KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH** But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. — Matthew 13:23

**ANSWER TITLE:** **Where Do I Stand?**

**SEARCH TITLE:** **Sower and the Seed**

**REFERENCE INFORMATION**

In the Bible, we find that the term *hear* means much more than just "the stimulation of the auditory nerves by a sound wave." It definitely implies that we should hear, comprehend, and act upon what we hear. The Apostle James says that if we are hearers of the Word and not doers, we are deceiving ourselves.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, when Moses speaks unto the Children of Israel, rehearsing their wanderings in the wilderness and the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, he frequently commands that they "hear." But, so no one might think that just hearing was sufficient, he said, "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them" (Deuteronomy 5:1).

The action we take as a response to what we hear will be determined by how well we hear. In today's lesson, the majority of the hearers were wayside hearers. Those who were concerned about the teachings of Jesus went to Him and learned the meaning of the parable. They proved to be the good ground that Jesus was talking about.

A lesson we can learn from this story is the importance of furnishing good ground and continuing on until harvest. The stony-ground hearers and the thorny-ground hearers made a good start, but failed to live to be harvested, refuting the idea that if you are once saved you are always saved. Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31).

**YOUR OPENER**

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# Sower and the Seed

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**KEY VERSE:** But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. — Matthew 13:23

## RESPONSES

1. Parables, as defined, were given by Christ to reveal spiritual truths. He wanted to be very sure those hearing Him paid attention to His words, and understood His message. Ask your class why they feel this was so vital. Guide the response to help your class understand the importance of God's Word and hiding it in their hearts (Psalm 119:11). To help explain, hold up an illustrated book and ask your students what purpose the illustrations serve. They will bring out that illustrations attract the reader's attention, may help explain the textual material, or highlight a major point of the written work.

2. The seed was devoured by fowls. This was likened in verse 12 to the seed lost when the devil comes and takes away the Word from the hearts of those who hear. In response to the second question, the students should conclude that the ground would be hard, not broken, and thus not receptive to the seed sown upon it. To what might the fowls be likened? Allow your students to offer suggestions. Some possibilities: false teachers, spirit of unbelief, pride, worldly enticements.

3. Allow time for students to make suggestions. They may bring out such thoughts as previously or continually rejecting God's call, not putting the proper value on the Word of God, and neglecting or procrastinating. It might be interesting to jot down the suggestions on a chalkboard as they are given. Then, in an opposite column, ask your class to suggest some preventive measures for each item noted.

4. A lack of prayer and of reading the Word create a dryness that destroys spiritual life. The verses in Jeremiah and John reveal that the Lord himself is the Fountain of Living Water. Ask for a volunteer to read Isaiah 55:1-3, using these verses to show that this living water is available to "every one that thirsteth."

God's Word brings life and spiritual fruit into the lives of those who receive it into their hearts. They must also believe and be obedient to His Word. But the life-giving power of God's Word can do nothing but condemn if not received in the heart by faith. "Take heed therefore how ye hear" (Luke 8:18). Jesus brought out the necessity of having a receptive heart in this parable of the Sower and the Seed.

1. A parable is an allegorical story from which a moral message or religious truth is taught. Why do you think Christ spoke in parables?

2. What happened to the seed that fell by the wayside and to what was this likened? What type of ground would you expect to find by the wayside?

3. What circumstances might cause the devil to take the Word from our hearts? What can be done to prevent this?

4. What might the lack of moisture mentioned in verse 6 mean? What is the source of the needed moisture? See Jeremiah 17:13 and John 4:14.

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## ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

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5. In reading verse 13 of the text, how can temptation cause failure of the seed to bring forth fruit?

6. Explain in your own words how you feel the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life choke the Word.

Cares

Riches

Pleasures

7. How can we really hear with our hearts and "keep it"? The Word gives us many suggestions. Look up the following Scriptures and identify what action should be taken.

Psalm 84:4

Proverbs 4:14

Ephesians 6:11

Ephesians 6:18

2 Timothy 2:15

Hebrews 11:6

Revelation 22:14

8. Read John 15:2 and note what happened to the non-fruit-bearing and fruit-bearing branches. Explain what you think is meant by this verse.

5. Temptation comes to all, and yielding to it will cause backsliding. However, God makes a way of escape that we might be able to bear it. See 1 Corinthians 10:13. This might be a good time to encourage your students to cite examples from their own experience or knowledge where resisting temptation brought victory.

6. Your students' responses may bring out thoughts such as:

Cares — crowd out the Word and use time that should be given to the Word.

Riches — cause their trust to be in material things rather than in the Word.

Pleasures — cause one to neglect the Word and follow the dictates of the carnal mind instead of obeying God.

The discussion should focus on the fact that their first priority must be to obey the Word of God.

7. Divide your class into groups. Assign each group one of the Scriptures from the list. Ask them to read the verse, identify what should be done to aid in the 'keeping' of the Word of God, and then suggest some specific ways this might be accomplished.

Psalm 84:4 — Attend church

Proverbs 4:14 — Avoid evil and evil associates

Ephesians 6:11 — Put on the whole armor

Ephesians 6:18 — Pray

2 Timothy 2:15 — Study

Hebrews 11:6 — Have faith

Revelation 22:14 — Obey

8. Nonfruit-bearing branches were taken away; those with fruit were purged to bring forth more fruit. After allowing time for your students to give their answers, ask them for some examples of specific ways the Lord purges. Why should they submit to this purging? Your students' thoughts regarding this should help you conclude your lesson by zeroing in on the objective, especially the responsibility of an individual to present a receptive heart to the Lord.

## YOUR WRAP-UP

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## SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

Who do you think the sower represents?

If the seed represents the Word, what might the water, which is necessary for seeds to grow and multiply, represent? Explain.

Before seeds can multiply they must be put into the soil. Make a comparison between seed-sowing and the spreading of God's Word.

Why does God liken His Word to a seed?

How does God view the open, honest-hearted person?

What will happen to a new convert if he doesn't seek deeper experiences?

Why does God give us a choice to accept or reject Him?

How do we prepare our hearts to receive Jesus?

## THINGS TO DO

To illustrate the lesson, bring a good flourishing plant, and a plant that won't grow because of wrong soil or lack of moisture. Point out to the class the importance of both good soil and moisture.

Bring several different types of seeds to class. Have the students try to identify them without a clue. Discuss the importance of sowing the right seed to get the desired harvest.

Bring to class a pair of baby's shoes, a pair of child's shoes, and a pair of adult's shoes. Point out that the different sizes portray growth. We expect a baby's feet to grow, necessitating the larger sizes. God also looks for spiritual growth in His children. The receptivity of our

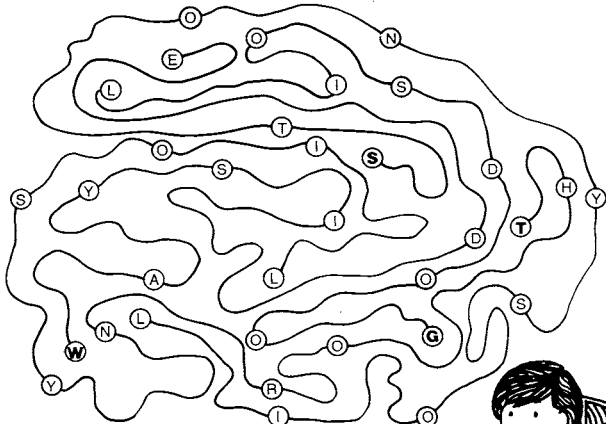
hearts to the truths of God's Word will determine our rate of spiritual growth.

Bring a brick or piece of cement, a pot of coarse gravel, a pot of good soil, and a pot full of weeds. Discuss whether a seed will or will not grow in each, and why.

## Answers for ANSWER

### Which Soil Are You?

When the sower was planting the seed it fell on different kinds of ground. There are four bold letters in the maze below. Using these as the starting points, follow each path and write the words on the lines provided.



Which kind of "soil" would you want your heart to be, when the seed (Word of God) is planted?

Good Soil

Wayside

Stony Soil

Thorny Soil

