



“Cultivating My Heart”

Luke 8

Small Group Plan

Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the parable of the soils. And for the people of his day agriculture was the best possible metaphor that Jesus could have chosen to describe how God comes into a human life. He told several parables that picture God penetrating deep into the soil of our lives, putting down roots and growing.

He taught that we hear God with all we have made of ourselves — with every sin that we cling to, with all of our worries, ambitions, and desires. They all come with us to meet the message of God. And we respond with welcome or defiance. It all depends upon what we bring to the hearing.

This is why Jesus’ parable of the soils is really a parable about hearing. Notice how it is surrounded and filled with a heavy concentration of discernment words.

Here is how it looks in the Gospel of Mark:

Mark 4:2 — *In his teaching he said, **Listen!***

Mark 4:9 — *He who has ears to **hear**, let him **hear**.*

Mark 4:12 — *They may be ... ever **hearing** but never understanding.*

Mark 4:15 — *As soon as they **hear** it, Satan comes and takes away the word.*

Mark 4:16-17 — *Others ... **hear** the word and at once receive it with joy.*

Mark 4:18-19 — *Still others ... **hear** the word; but ... choke the word.*

Mark 4:20 — *Others ... **hear** the word, accept it, and produce a crop.*

Mark 4:23 — *If anyone has ears to **hear**, let him **hear**.*

Mark 4:24 — *Consider carefully what you **hear**.*

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Why are some people very open to God while others are very closed?
- Describe the difference between hearing with your ears and hearing with your heart?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

“PATH”

— THE HARD UNRESPONSIVE HEART —

Luke 8:4-5, 11-12

⁴ While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: ⁵ “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up ... ¹¹ “This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

- How does God’s Word work as “seed” in our hearts?
- What kinds of things can harden a person’s heart?
- Verse 12 says that Satan takes the Word away. How does he do this?
- Since he cannot remove God’s seed unless we allow it, why do we allow it?

“ROCKY”

— THE SHALLOW UNDERNOURISHED HEART —

Luke 8:6, 13

⁶ Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture ... ¹³ Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.

- How can a person be easily moved by the beauty of God’s creation, and yet be just as easily moved by the enticement of Satan’s temptation?
- When Mark tells the story, he adds the detail that the soil is “shallow.” So, this person’s heart is both “shallow” and lacks “moisture.”
- How can a Christian’s shallow faith be deepened and given more room for spiritual roots to grow?
- What is the nourishment, the “moisture,” that every Christian needs to continue their spiritual growth?

“THORNY”
— **THE BUSY UNGUARDED HEART** —
Luke 8:7, 14

⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants ... ¹⁴ The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.

- There are “thorns” in our soil, competitors to God and to His seed. What are they? What competes with God for our time, resources and loyalty?
- Jesus makes a list from his day — worry, wealth, desires (v. 14). What are our greatest worries today?
- How would you order Jesus’ list (1st 2nd 3rd) as the most deadly competitors of God’s seed? Explain your answer.

“GOOD”
— **THE PRODUCTIVE UNLOCKED HEART** —
Luke 8:8, 15

⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown ... ¹⁵ But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

- Jesus mentions four characteristics of “good soil” ... The “noble and good heart” will:
 - ✓ **“hear the word”** — What attitude and what setting helps you the most to really begin to “hear” God’s word?
 - ✓ **“retain it”** — How does obedience drive the hearing process deeper into our hearts?
 - ✓ **“by persevering”** — As we make our plans, Satan makes his. In what areas of our lives is he most likely to attack?
 - ✓ **“produce a crop”** — Jesus describes the sower, seed, and soil. Of the three, where does the power to change reside? Explain.

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- At this moment, what kind of soil are you?
- Imagine that someone you know needs a plan for becoming “good soil.” Describe the plan that you would offer to them.
- Close in prayer thanking God for the power of his seed, his Word. Determine again, in prayer, that you will open your heart more fully to the seed of his Word.