

Luke 8:1-21
Gardening with Jesus

Study Summary and Learning Objectives

Using a seed analogy, Jesus describes four responses to the word of God and then in a rare instance explains the meaning of His parable. Continuing to elaborate on obedience, Jesus explains that His true family is those who hear the Word of God and act on it.

Objectives

- Examine the ways in which the Gospel sometimes fails to take root in a person's life.
- Think about how we can, as God's children, respond to His Word and draw closer to Him.

Steps to Prepare (For Leaders)

- Read Luke 8:1-21
- Brainstorm answers for your soil chart.
- Think about some of the areas in your life in which God is calling you to be more obedient, and prepare to share them during discussion and accountability time.

Section One: How To Plant A Seed

Read Out Loud: Luke 8:4-15 (NIV)

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. ⁶ Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown."

When he said this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

⁹ His disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰ He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,

"though seeing, they may not see;
though hearing, they may not understand."

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. 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. 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. 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.

What is a parable?

The term parable literally means to "set alongside," and Jesus often used stories to set spiritual truths alongside daily truths about life. Jesus' parables communicate spiritual truths to all who follow Him, but the meaning of these stories often remain obscured to those who rejected Him.

Leader's Note: This parable opens up discussions about predestination/free will. These kinds of conversations can be fruitful, but they can also turn into hurtful debates. The topic of predestination/free will is not the main point of this study; if your group wanders towards this topic, use your best judgment about how long to let that discussion flourish. Remind your group that God is

all-powerful and all-good, so our understanding of predestination and free will must retain that view of our Lord. Ultimately, the goal of this study is to understand how we can be more obedient to God's will and fruitful members of His family.

Questions for Discussion



Many of Jesus' teachings often confused His followers. What is your natural response when encountering a piece of Scripture you don't understand?

- How might the disciples' behavior in this passage offer a good example of how to react to difficult passages?

Possible Answers: The disciples came closer to God, they questioned, they listened, they followed.



According to Jesus' parable, what prevents some people from receiving the Word of God?

Possible Answers: The condition of the soil - which is affected by both internal and external forces. The people themselves can turn a deaf ear and have a hard heart. They can also have the good news stolen from them or choked out by the cares of this world.

Leader's Note: For the following question, use the chart in the handout (and below).



Jesus explains why the Word of God sometimes fails to take root in peoples' hearts; what do you think this looks like today?

Possible Answers: People get busy with life, careers, and families and stop making time for God. People build friendship and seek acceptance from the kinds of people who openly reject God. People pursue goals and "worship" ideals that are in direct opposition to His will, e.g. pursuing sex, money, and power for the sake of personal enjoyment.

<i>Types of soil</i>	<i>What might this look like today?</i>
<i>Birdy Soil</i>	
<i>Rocky Soil</i>	
<i>Thorny Soil</i>	
<i>Good Soil</i>	

? What can you do to improve your soil and help ensure that the Word of God produces more fruit in your life?

Possible Answers: The parable explains that those who hold fast and use patience when bearing fruit are those who are more likely to understand, cultivate, and grow God's Word in their hearts and actions.

Hold Fast! Seek Truth! Be Patient!

Section Two: Industrial Lighting

Read Out Loud: Luke 8:16-21 (NIV)

¹⁶ “No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. ¹⁷ For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. ¹⁸ Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them.”

¹⁹ Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. ²⁰ Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.”

²¹ He replied, “My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.”

Questions for Discussion

? Given the context of the previous parable, what do you think the light represents in verses 16-18?

Possible Answers: God's Word. Much like light, God's Word reveals and uncovers the things that would otherwise be hidden. This is bad news for sinners, but those who are covered by the Gospel have little to fear from this kind of revealing, which is why Jesus urges the crowds to “listen” and receive God's Word.

? In both parables Jesus talks about hearing the Word of God (verse 8 and 18). Why do you think "listening" is one of Jesus' main points in both parables?

Possible Answers: All too often we're busy acting and planning our next move. As Christians we're worried about our behavior and actively trying not to sin, but God wants us to listen to His Word first. We must understand what God is telling us before we can act on it.

? Initially verses 19 through 21 might look like the beginning of a new story, but Luke intentionally wrote these two sections next to each other. How do you think Jesus' comment about family relates to His parables?

Possible Answer: In the previous parables Jesus essentially talks about obedience, listening to God's Word, and following. Jesus then identifies His true family as those who hear the word of God and are obedient to do it. Jesus describes his family as those seeds planted in good soil.

For Discussion and Accountability

Read Out Loud: The ESV offers us a different translation of Luke 8:15, "As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience."

? In what areas of my life do I need to "hold fast" and be obedient to God's commands?