

# Parable of the Sower

## Understand Yourself to Understand God

### WEEK 1

#### OVERVIEW

1. Unpack your heart
2. Make room for your roots
3. Throw out your thorns
4. Watch your faith in God grow

#### OPENING QUESTION

Who is someone who understands you well?  
How do you feel being around them?

#### INTRODUCTION

Before we can understand God and see him as personal, we must first understand ourselves and what we bring into the relationship.

This Bible study will help us get started in the process of becoming self-aware by taking us on a journey through "The Parable of the Sower" in Matthew 13.

#### STEP 1: UNPACK YOUR HEART

*Later that same day Jesus left the house and sat beside the lake. A large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat there and taught as the people stood on the shore. He told many stories in the form of parables, such as this one: "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them.*

– **Matthew 13:1-4 NLT**

- **The farmer and the seed:** In this story, the farmer represents God, and the seed is the Word of God.
- **The footpath:** What is the soil in a footpath like? It is packed soil that has hardened enough to be walked on.
- **How does this relate to me?** Our hearts can become "packed" or hardened when we ignore, avoid, or suppress what's inside them.

*The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts.*

– **Matthew 13:19 NLT**

- **What happens to my relationship with God when my heart is hard?** A hardened heart has no room for the Word of God to grow. If our hearts are packed up, Satan and the forces of darkness can snatch the Word away from us and stop us from believing.
- The first thing we can do to "unpack our hearts" is tell ourselves and others the truth about what's going on inside us.

#### Pause and reflect

- What relationship, negative emotion, or area of my life do I avoid or ignore talking about most? Why?
- How has this affected my heart and attitude toward God's Word?

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#### NOTES

#### STEP 2: MAKE ROOM FOR YOUR ROOTS

*Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died.*

– Matthew 13:5-6 NLT

- **Shallow soil with underlying rocks:** This soil has some softness, but there are deep, untouched rocks that still prevent God's Word from growing like it could.
- **How does this relate to me?** Without deep roots, we might respond with enthusiasm to the Bible initially, but we will give up quickly when the going gets tough (Matthew 13:20-21).

#### Pause and reflect

- What are some "deep rocks" in my life and heart? Have I experienced frustration or defeat in trying to deal with these rocks? Why?
- How do these "deep rocks" get in the way of God's Word taking deeper root in my life?

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#### NOTES

#### STEP 3: THROW OUT YOUR THORNS

*Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants... The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced.*

- **Matthew 13:7, 22 NLT**

- **Thorny soil:** God's Word gets crowded out or choked by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth.
- **The lure of wealth:** Wealth" is not just the amount of money in our bank account. It is also things like status, respect from people, power, and control that we think will satisfy us or provide more security for our lives than a relationship with God would.
- **How does this relate to me?** Worries and the lure of wealth take up room in our hearts, choking out any faith, understanding, or love for God from our lives. Only by throwing out these thorns can we develop clear hearts that are receptive and attached to God.

Two decisions we can make to "throw out" our thorns are:

1. **Have honest prayers.** Learn to honestly share with God why we choose worry and status instead of him. Then we can be honest about the underlying anxieties, desires, and worries that fuel us to pursue other things more than God (1 Peter 5:6-7).
2. **Have honest conversations with friends.** Choose to talk with key friends both past and present to ask them how our "thorns" affect them and our relationship. Decide to prioritize building these relationships over pursuing our personal ambitions.

#### Pause and reflect

- What "thorns" of worry or forms of wealth consume you more than God and relationships? Why?
- How do I see these thorns crowd out room for God, his Word, and close relationships?
- What honest prayer and conversations will I have to throw out these thorns and renew my relationships with God and friends?

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#### NOTES

#### STEP 4: WATCH YOUR FAITH IN GOD GROW

*Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.... The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!*

- **Matthew 13:8-9, 23 NLT**

- **A soft heart is open and responsive to God.**
- **Good soil** leads to growth in a deeper understanding of God.
- **Producing a crop:** When our hearts are soft, our faith, love, and conviction will grow in ways we never could have made happen on our own. That's when God's message and purpose shine through our lives and overflow into changing the lives of those around us.

#### Pause and reflect

- Which stage of heart describes mine best today: hardened, rocky, thorny, or soft?
- How is my view of God and relationship with him influenced by what's in my heart?
- What honest conversations will I have and what key decisions will I make to respond to what I read today?