

THE SEED

Small Group Study Guide | March 31, 2024

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Today is Easter Sunday, also called Resurrection Sunday, when we celebrate Jesus' resurrection after His crucifixion and death. For Bible-based information on Christ's resurrection, see the Easter-related articles at gotquestions.org.

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus often used parables in His teaching?

Key Text: "Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. 2 And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: 3 'Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow [seed].'" (Mark 4:1-3)

Today we begin a new series called "Grow (Up)" in which we'll study Jesus' parable known as "The Parable of the Sower" in Mark 4:1-20. Let's begin by defining what a parable is, why Jesus used parables, and why the "Parable of the Sower" is so important.

- **What is a parable?**

A parable is a short story with profound spiritual truth. A parable usually relates a common, familiar object such as a seed, or an event such as a wedding, or a fictitious person such as a rich but foolish man, to a deeper spiritual truth.

Discuss: Do you have a favorite parable of Jesus? If so, which one and why?

- **Why did Jesus teach in parables?**

Jesus used parables as a teaching aid. Three of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) record about thirty of Jesus' parables (there are no parables in the Gospel of John). In fact, for a season during His ministry, Jesus taught *only* in parables: "He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything" (Mk.4:34). While many people think Jesus spoke in parables to help unbelievers better understand spiritual truth, Jesus told His disciples: "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [unbelievers] it has not been given" (Mat.13:11). In other words, Jesus gave parables to instruct His disciples, not to convert unbelievers—because their hearts were closed toward God, unbelievers *could not* understand the symbolic meanings of the parables (Mk.4:12).

- **Why is the "Parable of the Sower" important?**

The Parable of the Sower is not only the very first parable Jesus used, but also the most important of all the parables! Jesus said that to understand all His parables, we must first understand this Parable of the Sower: "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?" (Mk.4:13). As we'll learn in our series, this foundational parable pictures the seed as God's Word (Mk.4:14), the soil as the human heart (Mk.4:13-20), and the sower as the Christian who shares God's Word with others (Mk.4:3; 1 Cor.3:6).

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus would say this "Parable of the Sower" is the most important of all the parables—we must understand it first to understand all the other parables (see Mark 4:13)?

1. The seed is the Word of God

The Bible is pictured by many symbols in Scripture. For example, David depicts God's Word as a lamp and a light (Ps.119:105), Jeremiah pictures God's Word as a fire and a hammer (Jer.23:29), Paul portrays God's Word as a sword (Eph.6:17), James illustrates God's Word as a mirror (Jms.1:23), and Peter describes God's Word as nourishing milk (1 Pet.2:2). In Mark 4:14, Jesus made it clear that the seed represents the Word of God: "The sower sows the word."

Discuss: According to Psalm 119:25, how does God's Word affect a person's life like a seed affects the ground?

2. Like a seed, God's Word has spiritual life in it.

A seed could not impart life if it was not first alive itself—a dead seed produces no life. Hebrews 4:12 describes God's Word as "living and active." The Bible is not a dead book that merely records historical people and events; rather, it is dynamic and productive, pulsating with spiritual energy! Because God is the "living God" (Heb.3:12), His Word is the living Word! 1 Peter 1:23 says, "You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God."

Discuss: In John 6:63, how did Jesus associate God's Word with life?

3. Like a seed, God's Word generates spiritual life, growth, and fruit.

When properly received by the soil, a seed generates life and growth. Similarly, when a person receives the Scripture into their heart with intention to obey, God's Word brings about spiritual life, growth, and fruit. Paul reminds us that God's Word is "at work in [us] believers" (1 Thess.2:13).

Discuss: According to 2 Timothy 3:15, how did the seed of God's Word bring about spiritual life in Timothy?

Discuss: According to 1 Peter 2:2, what role does God's Word play in a person's spiritual growth?

Discuss: According to these verses, what effects will God's Word have in our lives when we receive it properly: Psalm 19:7-8, 11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12?

Discuss: According to 2 Peter 1:19, what should our attitude be toward the Bible?

Discuss: In what ways has God's Word impacted your life?

For Further Study:

Free online study tools (commentaries, dictionaries, etc.) at blueletterbible.org

How to Listen to God by Charles Stanley

For Bible-based answers to questions about the Bible, go to gotquestions.org.