

1

Chapter 1 Greatest Parable of All Time

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- A. In each SELF-REFLECTION section, write your own personal responses as you read through the book, *Secrets of a Fruitful Heart*. Your notes will be personal between you and the Lord.
- B. As you launch this study on the parable of the sower, tell the Lord where you're at. What do you want Him to do in your heart during this study? Are there any areas of struggle in your walk with Christ that you want to make note of? Finish this sentence: "Dear Lord Jesus, as I come to this study, I'm asking You to

- C. Matthew 3:7-12 is quoted in Chapter One. Read the passage again and look specifically at all the metaphors in that passage: Vipers, fruits, stones, ax, root, trees, fire, winnowing fan, threshing floor, wheat, barn, chaff. Which of those metaphors strikes you most right now? Why?

- D. Jesus used several visuals in our parable—a field, a sower, a wayside, stones, and weeds. Do those visuals help you see and remember the parable better? Can you think of another teaching or story in the Bible that has spoken real strongly to you because of the visuals or metaphors in it?

FOUR SOILS

Trampled Heart

Shallow Heart

Neglected Heart

Fruitful Heart

HINDRANCE

Birds

Stones

Weeds

All three

MAIN ISSUE

Unbelief

Tolerated Sin

Distractions

30/60/100-Fold

CROP

Stolen

Scorched

Choked

Productive

TOOL

Hoe

Shovel

Sickle

All three

- E. Throughout this study, as we return repeatedly to the above chart, your understanding of the parable's message will grow. You'll realize that the parable's main message is found in the chart's third column. If there's something in the chart you don't understand yet, write your question. And if there's something enlightening in the chart, write what you're seeing.

- F. The word *parable* means *to throw alongside*. Thus, objects from everyday life are placed alongside spiritual truths so that our understanding of truth is enhanced. Look at Jesus' three parables in Matthew 13:24-33, and then choose one to examine more closely. List the objects in the parable, and what those objects represent. What is the parable's message? How does it apply to your life?

OBJECT	SPIRITUAL REPRESENTATION

- G. The author calls this Jesus' *sledgehammer parable* because not all truth carries equal weight. For example, Jesus said that justice, mercy, and faith are weightier truths in Scripture than truths about tithes (Matt 23:23). Take some time to ponder Matthew 23:23, and write why you think Jesus called justice, mercy, and faith *weightier*. Why might you call the sower parable *weightier*?

IH. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each tell this parable in full. They use 580, 476, and 329 words respectively. Matthew placed it in the center of his book to show that this was Jesus central parable. All three emphasize that Jesus delivered this parable when a large multitude had gathered. In fact, Mark used *multitude* twice: “And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea” (Mark 4:1). Why did Jesus wait to tell this parable until a multitude was present? Are there any differences between the three accounts of the parable that you want to observe here? Are there any differences between the three accounts of the parable that you want to observe here? See Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

(choose from these questions)

- A. Do you agree with the author that the parable of the sower is the greatest of all parables? Why or why not?
- B. A believer is someone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God and that He was crucified for us and rose from the dead. But a disciple is more than just a believer. A disciple is someone who is eager to hear and obey every word of Jesus. Jesus didn't commission us to make *believers* of all nations but to make *disciples* of all nations (Matt 28:19). What does this distinction between believers and disciples mean to you?
- C. Was there a statement in Chapter One you'd like to highlight to the group?
- D. During our times of group discussion, sometimes we'll ask whether there's a certain seed from God's word that has been working in your heart recently. In other words, is there a certain Scripture or scriptural idea that has been especially meaningful for you—something that you'd like to share with the group? Maybe it's a verse that has strengthened your faith or inspired your love. It can come from any place in your Bible reading. If the verse encouraged you, it may also encourage someone else in the group. In keeping with that, let's ask that question now. Is there a certain seed (word of God) that has been especially working in your heart this past week?
- E. Look over the bullet points at the bottom of Chapter One in the book. Which of those motivates you most to become more fruitful?
- F. Close in prayer. For suggestions on how to lead this prayer time, review the “Guidelines for Closing Prayers” on page 3.
 - 1. Express to the Lord what you're asking Him to do in your heart as you launch into this study. Ask for greater fruitfulness.

