



IMPARTING
GOD'S WISDOM...

1COR.2:6-7

**PARABLES OF
— JESUS —**





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PREPARING TO TEACH

Congratulations! What an awesome responsibility it is to participate in the discipleship and education of adult believers. By His amazing grace, our triune God moves His people from death to life through the process of justification and sanctification. We are in constant need of heart transformation, mind renewal, and behavior change. The Christian life is to be one of growth and maturity in order to glorify God by loving Him and other people. To that end, God has given His people His Word and all truth to learn and to apply. And, He has blessed us with gifted teachers like you.

This Teacher's Manual is designed for a 13-week adult discipleship class or Sunday School. The format is mainly lecture, but can include as much discussion as your context allows. Each lesson is divided into three segments: **Opening, Rewind,** and **Bible Investigation.**

The **Opening** is where you start. It offers introductory information about the Book of the Bible being taught. Each lesson gives important content to increase knowledge of the Scriptures.

The next section is the **Rewind.** It allows the students to have a brief review, connecting them back to what was previously investigated. Context and review is essential when teaching the Bible.

The heart and soul of the lesson is the **Bible Investigation** time. Each lesson takes the students through a certain amount of Bible text, in order to cover the content. The Scripture is to be read and discussed, making **observations** and **applications** along the way. Ultimately, you are teaching the students to know, study, and "do" God's Word on their own.

Teaching the New Testament. All of God's Word teaches us the ONE STORY of redemption in Jesus Christ. When studying the gospels, we have the earthly life of our Savior unfolded before our eyes. One of the richest sources of lessons about the Kingdom of God and Christ's kingship come in the New Testament parables. These stories are to be taught in context of the original listeners, as well as applied to your students as present and future Kingdom-dwellers. The parables of Jesus should change how we live the Christian life.

Ultimately, you prepare to teach others the parables of Jesus by a growing dependence on the Word and the Spirit. Grow in that grace as you teach.

LESSON ONE / THE SOWER

OVERVIEW

Jesus calls His first recorded parable “The Parable of the Sower,” even though it is more of a story about various soils. This is one of only two parables that Jesus Himself gives us the interpretation. He reminds us that parables are meant to be simple, teaching us one or two main lessons.

The sower is not identified by Jesus. The seed is the Word of God, or the gospel. So, anyone who spreads the Word of God is a sower. The seeds of the gospel are spread out across the world, to anyone who will hear. The soils in Christ’s parable represent various hearts that “hear” the Word of God.

The first seeds are sown on the path. This “bad soil” represents hard hearts; people who do not understand the gospel. The second seeds fall on rocky ground. This soil represents hearts that look like they are receiving the gospel joyfully, but have no root. A third set of seeds fall on thorny ground. The cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke out the gospel, so there is no fruit. These three soils represent people who are not Christians.

The last soil is called “good soil.” When the seed of the gospel falls on this heart, a harvest of fruit is produced! Only by the work of the Spirit can we have good soil hearts.

APPLICATION ▶

- When you are sharing the gospel with another, you are sowing the seed!
- The Word of God must be implanted in our hearts for change to occur.
- This first soil represents those who are disinterested in and unresponsive to the Word of God.
- The second soil represents those who look like they are Christians, but show their true colors when persecution comes.
- Faith without works is dead. The third soil shows us that the cares of this world chokes out faith.
- Our responsibility is to spread the seeds of the gospel. God is the one who prepares the hearts of people to receive it!



OPENING

Greet the students. Welcome visitors. Open with prayer.

Most Christians are somewhat familiar with the parables of Jesus, at least the more “famous” ones like the Sower, the Prodigal Son, and the Good Samaritan. In addition to the some of the ones you know best, we will work together to study many of Jesus’ parables during this course, for a better understanding of them.

In our OPENING times each week, we will examine a different aspect of the parables in general before we study specific ones. Today, we will start with some basic definitions of the word PARABLE.

A parable is a brief, simple story that is designed to communicate a spiritual truth.

A parable is a story that seeks to make a point by illustrating it from a familiar situation of common life.

A parable is a simple “earthly” story with a profound “heavenly” meaning.

Taken together, these definitions give us a good starting point to our study of the parables. Keep them in mind as we dive into our first one today.



REWIND

Now, we will move on to a time we call REWIND. In order to keep each lesson in context, and to maximize our learning, we’ll remind ourselves of what we learned in the past.

Since this is our first week in our Parables of Jesus, we don’t have any parables to review yet. So, we will go to Matthew 12:46-50, which records what happened right before Jesus tells His first parable. Jesus’ mother and his brothers were trying to see him. He stretched out His hand to His disciples and said: “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:50).

Keep this context in mind as we move on to the Parable of the Sower. It ties right into the main point of the parable!

BIBLE INVESTIGATION



Introduction: *Jesus calls His first recorded parable: “The Parable of the Sower.” But as you read it, it is more a story about soils than a sower. It is one of two parables that Jesus actually gives us the interpretation. This makes it a great parable with which to start, to teach us how Jesus wants us to understand all His parables. We can consider the Parable of the Sower our “model parable.”*

One thing that is fascinating about Christ’s interpretation about this parable is that He does not teach spiritual truths in every single detail of the story. What He does is focus our attention upon central themes, teaching us that parables are meant to be simple and clear.

Parable #1: The Sower (Matthew 13:1-9)

Read verses 1-9.

¹ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ² And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear.”

A. The Context

Observations: *On “that same day” Jesus sat on the shore of the sea and told this first parable. **Looking at Matthew 12, what had Jesus been doing that day?** He had been healing the sick, confronting demons, and teaching crowds of people. Apparently, more great crowds gathered around Jesus to hear Him explain the amazing events of the day.*

The image of a “sower” or “farmer” who went out to sow would have been commonplace in that day. Like any typical farmer, he would have had a bag of seeds slung over his neck. With a rhythmic step, he would cast the seed in strips across his field. The seeds would all land on different places with a variety of results. This was all a part of normal farming in the ancient world.



B. The Sower

Read verse 3.

³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow.”

Observations: *Remember, Jesus actually interprets this parable for us in verses 18-23. **Does He say who the sower is?** No! Jesus leaves this significant element of the story unexplained, showing us that it is not His most important point. **Who would the listeners have thought the sower was?** Most likely, they would have thought the sower was Jesus. After all, they had watched him declare the gospel of the Kingdom in word and deed all day long. He was certainly “sowing seeds.”*

Read Matthew 13:37.

³⁷ He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.”

Observations: *This is part of Jesus’ explanation of the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds. So, He certainly could be referring to Himself as the sower. But, recognize that Jesus says “a” sower. **Who else could be “a” sower?** The disciples could be sowers. The church in her public ministry of the Word could be a sower.*

► **Application:** *When you share the gospel with others, you are acting as a sower of seed!*

C. The Seed

Read Luke 8:11.

¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

Observations: *This is the parallel account in the Gospel of Luke. So, it’s clear that the seed is the Word of God.*

Read Matthew 13:19

¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom...

Observations: *This is how Jesus explains the seed. **What is the “word of the kingdom?”** The seed is not just some evangelistic message, but the entire Word of God.*

Read 1 Peter 1:23-35.

²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴ for “All

flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.



Observations: *Peter uses similar language as Jesus. The seed is the “abiding word of God.” It is also the “good news that was preached.”*

- ▶ **Application:** *The Word of God must be planted in our hearts in order for change to occur!*

D. The Bad Soils

Read Matthew 13:19.

¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

Observations: *According to Jesus’ explanation of this parable, the soils represent human hearts. More specifically, the soils in the parable are hearts of those who have heard the Word of God (the seed). So, the picture we are given by Jesus is the seed of the Word being scattered all over the world. Every person who hears the Word, the gospel of Jesus Christ, responds in a different way. Ultimately, Jesus gives us four basic responses...*

Read Matthew 13:19 again.

¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

Observations: *Fields in Israel were usually small, divided by paths where the soil was beaten down by human feet and summer sun. The paths would have been as hard as concrete. As the sower walked through the field, some seeds landed on this impenetrable soil. **What happened to those seeds?** They were snatched away by birds, who represent the evil one.*

- ▶ **Application:** *This first soil represents hardened hearts that do not understand the gospel. They are disinterested in and unresponsive to the Word of God.*

Read Matthew 13:20-21.

²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.



Observations: *The second type of soil was not ground with some stones in it, but a thin layer of soil on an underlying layer of rock. Seeds would sink into this soil, germinate, and grow, but never develop a healthy root system. When the sun beat down on this soil, the plants withered and died.*

How does the parable describe these hearers? *At first, they receive the message of the gospel very enthusiastically. They appear to be converted. But, when their faith was tested, when they were persecuted, they fell away.*

► **Application:** *Are these people Christians or non-Christians? This is not true faith, but superficial and temporary pseudo-faith. Failing the test of faith proves it is not real.*

Read Matthew 13:22.

²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Observations: *The third soil in our parable is a soil that has not been cleared of weeds (thorns). This results in the seed never getting really established. It grows a little, but then is choked out by the weeds. The plant can never grow fruit.*

How does the parable describe these hearers? *Again, they hear the word, but then the cares (worries) of the world enter their minds and hearts. In addition, the temptation of worldly wealth has an impact. A focus on what the world finds most important chokes out the gospel. These people seemingly have a young “faith” but no fruit is produced in their lives.*

► **Application:** *So, we are back to the question again: Are these people Christians or non-Christians? This soil seems to point us to the truth that “faith without works is dead” (James 2). Fruit is not something that only some Christians produce. When people are “unfruitful,” they ultimately lack true faith as well.*

E. The Good Soil

Read Matthew 13:23.

²³ As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”



Observations: Notice that this last one is the only soil described as “good soil.” But what makes it good? It doesn’t make itself good. This is clearly the work of the Holy Spirit, who prepares the soil to receive the seed of the gospel.

The good soil is the first soil that does more than just “hear” the word. It hears AND understands! True faith requires knowledge AND understanding. People must accept the facts of the gospel, believe in the gospel, and receive (trust) the gospel as ultimate truth.

Good soil also bears good fruit. The fruit that is produced are good works of the Kingdom of God. There is always an abundant harvest when the gospel transforms lives. Yet, the harvest is different for each person (100, 60, and 30-fold).

► **Application:** Our responsibility is to spread the seed of the gospel. God is the one who prepares the hearts of people to receive it!

Conclusion: The Parable of the Sower gives us a picture of how people respond the gospel. It is all a work of God’s grace for bad soil sinners like us!