

STUDY GUIDE

NEW VISION
THE MIDDLE
PARABLE OF
THE SOWER
LUKE 8:1-18
10/22/2017



NEW VISION

MAIN POINT

A relationship with Jesus is defined by receptivity to the Word of God.

INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Who is the best listener you know and why?

What is the difference between hearing something and listening to something?

There are few things more rewarding than knowing you have been heard and understood. Experiences like that inspire us to be great listeners ourselves. This is good for many reasons, not least of which is the desire God has for us to hear His Word and respond obediently. This is our topic of discussion today.

READ AND REBUILD THE STORY LUKE 8:1-18

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER TELL THE STORY (LUKE 8:1-18) DO AS BEST YOU CAN, DO NOT STOP AND TEACH, TRY NOT TO MAKE POINTS (COMMENTARY), JUST TELL THE STORY.

REBUILD THE STORY AS A GROUP: CHRONOLOGICALLY REBUILD THE STORY FROM MEMORY. ASK QUESTIONS IF NECESSARY. LIKE – “WHAT HAPPENED FIRST?”, “WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?”, “DID WE LEAVE OUT ANYTHING?” FINALLY, HAVE PARTICIPANTS LOOK AT THEIR BIBLES AND SEE IF ANYTHING WAS ADDED OR LEFT OUT OF THE STORY AS THEY GO THROUGH IT ONE MORE TIME

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 8:4-8.

What is a parable? Why does Jesus use parables?

What did Jesus describe in this particular parable? Is this a parable about the sower, the seeds, or the soil? Why?

What were the predominant characteristics of each kind of soil?

From this point forward, Jesus used the parable approach to teaching much more. In an agricultural society, everyone would have understood what happened when a sower went out into a field to sow his seed. At least one path ran through most fields, and much of the terrain in Israel was rocky under a thin layer of topsoil. Dropping seeds along such paths was futile. Many fields had thorn bushes along the perimeters. Seeds falling there had no chance to grow and survive until harvest time. Others, however, did fall on fertile soil and produced a bumper crop (100 times what was sown).

Why do you think so many people heard the words of Jesus but then didn't understand them?

What about Jesus' identity and/or mission made Him hard to listen to?

Do you see similar things happening in culture today? In what ways do you see people hearing the words of Jesus but not really listening to them?

Too many people suffer from selective hearing. They either hear only what they want to hear or they refuse to understand what they do hear. Far worse are those who hear and understand but do not act on what they hear. Anyone who has ears to hear should listen is a challenge to carefully consider the story and its hidden meaning and practical implications.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 8:9-15.

Based on Jesus' interpretation, what character traits would be representative of each kind of soil?

Which of the soils produce similar results? What do these results portray? Which soil is unique and how so?

In His parable, Jesus described four types of soil, with soil representing people who hear the gospel. The first three refer to people who are not saved but who have varying responses to the seed of the Word of God. Then Jesus contrasted those types of people with people whose hearts are good ground. The same good seed fell on all four types of soil, but only this last example refers to a person who has been born again.

Do you know people represented by each of these soils? What kind of "soil" best represents you now? Five years ago?

When we share our faith with others, we are the farmer spreading the seed. What help do you get from this parable about sharing your faith?

According to verse 15, what are the characteristics of a person who has been born again?

First, the person hears the Word of God with an honest and good heart. The second characteristic of people whose hearts are good soil is that they hold on to Christ's teaching. Finally, Jesus said the seed in the good soil would bear fruit with endurance. True believers make a faith commitment that endures to the end. Their lives are spiritually productive and they consistently live in obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word.

HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 8:16-18.

According to Luke 8:16-18, what's wrong with putting a light under a basket or a bed? What's wrong with acting as though faith in Christ is a private matter?

What differences have you noticed in your life when you are applying God's Word and living in His truth, compared to times when you stray from it?

How does the parable of the lamp relate to the parable of the sower?

The truth of the parable and the illustration of the lamp point out the importance of how people listen—what they do with what they hear. Echoing the words of verse 8b, Jesus urged the disciples to take care. They should not be “hearers only” (James 1:22), but rather should apply what they have heard to their lives. People genuinely committed to Jesus will show it by what they do and how they grow spiritually.

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

General Questions to ask after each story. These questions may lead to follow up questions that you ask as you dig deeper into the groups/individuals response to the initial questions.

Where do you see yourself in this story?

What do we learn about Jesus/God in this story?

What do we learn about man in this story?

What is Jesus teaching you personally through this story?

What application/adjustment do you need to make in your life due to the truth discovered in this story?

Extra Questions:

What active ways can we till the soil of our hearts to make us ready to receive the word of God? Before worship? Before our group? Before our personal time with God?

Why is it not enough to just hear the word of God? What does putting it into practice reveal about our commitment to Him?

Is there something you have been hearing and not doing?

PRAY

As a closing prayer activity, spend time listening to the prayer requests of the people in your group. Encourage each group member to share. In addition to basic needs, ask your group members to voice specific prayer requests concerning areas of their lives where they are struggling to apply God's Word.

COMMENTARY

LUKE 8:1-18

8:1-3 As Jesus was traveling and preaching in Galilee, He was accompanied by the Twelve and several well-to-do women who, out of gratitude for being healed by Jesus, financially supported Him and the apostles. Mary Magdalene

(i.e., of the town of Magdala), who became a well-known follower (Mt 27:61), is introduced here. Joanna, who is also mentioned in 24:10, was married to a man who held a responsible position under Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee. Nothing else is known about Susanna.

8:5-8 From this point forward, Jesus used the parable approach much more, the purpose of which is explained in verses 9-10. In an agricultural society, everyone would have understood what happened when a sower went out into a field to sow his seed. At least one path ran through most fields, and much of the terrain in Israel was rocky under a thin layer of topsoil. Dropping seeds along such paths was futile. Many fields had thorn bushes along the perimeters. Seeds falling there had no chance to grow and survive until harvest time. Others, however, did fall on fertile soil and produced a bumper crop (100 times what was sown).

8:9-10 His disciples, probably indicating the Twelve, inquired of Jesus what He meant. The introductory then suggests the disciples were motivated by the parable to know more about its meaning. Jesus complimented the disciples because they asked about His teaching. Others did not want to understand, did not put their faith in Jesus, and did not understand. Thus they fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 6:9, which Jesus quoted. After calling for the crowd to listen responsibly to His parable, Jesus explained that some harden themselves to the gospel but those who are willing to trust Him can understand its truth.

8:11-12 In explaining the parable to the Twelve, Jesus focused on the one consistent aspect, the seed. While different types of soil are described, the sower did not discriminate as to where he sowed. He distributed the seed—the word of God—all along the way. Jesus described four types of soil. The first three refer to people who are not saved but who have varying responses to the seed of the Word of God. The hard soil of the path represented people whose hearts were hardened. In the agriculture of Jesus' day, fields were crisscrossed with paths where people normally walked from one place to another, wearing the soil into a compacted state, making it resistant to the seed strewn by the hand of a sower. This soil rejects the seed. It represents those who allow the Devil to take the Word from their hearts. Jesus was not saying that the Devil had the power to take the gospel out of the hearts of those who had been saved. Instead, the phrase comes from the Greek word that means “from” or “away from” as opposed to “from within.”

8:13 Referring to the seed falling on rocky soil, Jesus depicted people who liked what they heard but who did not receive His message or teaching into their hearts. Many people hear the good news of Jesus and welcome the idea of being saved but do not receive Jesus by faith into their lives. When a time of testing comes, the proof of their lack of receiving Christ is shown by their departure.

8:14 The thorny soil represents people who are not committed to Christ, even though they have heard the Word of God. Instead of making a faith commitment to Jesus, they merely add their thoughts of Christ to the periphery of their lives. Other matters, such as worries, riches and pleasures of life are more central to their concerns. Consequently, such people do not produce mature fruit that would denote seed that actually had taken root in their lives.

8:15 Lastly, Jesus contrasted the first three types of people with those whose hearts are good ground. The same good seed fell on all four types of soil, but only this last example refers to a person who has been born again. Only those who genuinely commit themselves to Jesus Christ will be saved, and they will live consistently in obedience to Him and His Word.

8:16-17 Jesus used the illustration of a lamp to show the absurdity of someone claiming to be a believer but trying to keep it a secret from others. A true believer displays faith not in a self-righteous or self-glorifying way but so others may see the light and come to Christ.

8:18 The truth of the parable and the illustration of the lamp point out the importance of how people listen—what they do with what they hear. Whoever hears, understands, and acts with commitment on the basis of God's Word will gain more insight into that Word. However, those who have not received Christ's teaching will lose what they think they have. Thus Jesus gave further instructions on listening to Him, calling for genuine commitment that is openly shared and leads to continued spiritual growth.