

Life Group Questions

November 6th, 2022

The Word to Treasure - Pastor Ray Harms-Wieb – [Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23](#)

To the Life Group leader: thank you for your ministry leading this Life Group. **Take time to review the questions, selecting those you believe will be most helpful for your group study.** You will not have time to use all the questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you lead, as you select questions, and as you guide the discussion.

Reconnect

Come together with these preliminary questions:

- How has God gifted you to serve Him?
- How will you serve Him this fall at Willingdon Church?
- Where has God placed you in the city? What is your role there?

Open in Prayer

Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you through the text, the questions, and each other.

Message Recap Questions

Review the message using these questions

1. What stood out to you most in this week's message?
2. What was the most meaningful thing you heard in the message? Why?
3. What questions are still lingering?

Questions

1. In our culture today, what do you think is the most important question people are asking? What questions are non-Christians asking? What is at the heart of their questions?
2. Where was Jesus when he taught the crowds? Where were the people (Matthew 13:1-3)? What teaching method did Jesus use?
3. Define parable.
4. For each kind of soil in Matthew 13:3-8, tell where the seed fell and what happened to it.
 - **Path**
 - **Rocky**
 - **Thorns**

- **Good Soil**

5. What does Jesus mean in Matthew 13:9 when he talks about ears and hearing? (All humans have ears but not all hear)
6. How should we respond to this parable? What self-reflective questions should we be asking ourselves?
7. How do we grow individually and corporately as Christians?
8. Has the 'seed' been growing in your walk with Jesus? What growth have you noticed throughout the year? What growth would you ask the Holy Spirit to help with?
9. Pastor Ray, in his sermon, addressed that our heads and hearts can be distracted by the world, how can we encourage each other to remain focused on God's Word?

Choose Your Next Step

What next step will you commit to for the upcoming week (and beyond)?

Closing Prayer

A closing prayer is an effective way to point people back to our Loving Father as they seek to apply their new learnings throughout the week. Ask group members to share what they sense God calling them to. Pray for each other and commit to continue to do so during the week as people step out in obedience to God's leading.

Commentary

Introduction:

This well-known and much applied parable is drawn from the processes of agriculture, which would have been very well known to Jesus' hearers. For that matter even modern city-dwellers can understand it. It makes effectively the point that the one message can produce different results in different hearers. It is common in recent discussions to have it said that the parable is concerned simply with eschatology: it stresses the greatness of the coming kingdom in contrast to the present small beginnings. Perhaps this view does not give sufficient attention to such facts as the absence of any reference to the kingdom in this parable and the amount of attention that is given to the variety of ways in which the seed may come to nothing.

1. In our culture today, what do you think is the most important question people are asking? What questions are non-Christians asking? What is at the heart of their questions?
2. Where was Jesus when he taught the crowds? Where were the people (Matthew 13:1-3)? What teaching method did Jesus use?

On that day connects the following session of teaching with the preceding time of discussion with the Pharisees and scribes. Jesus went out of the house where he was; it is probably significant that Matthew uses the same verb here as that in the opening of the first parable where the sower *went out* to sow. Later in the chapter the sower of the good seed is the Son of man (Matthew 13:37). Clearly Matthew wants the reader to see that it is Jesus who is the sower. Having gone out of the house, Jesus made his way to the shore of the lake (it is not necessary to add the name; there was only one lake that could be meant). There he *sat down*, which is the posture for teaching and indicates that he was getting ready to teach the crowd. This is supported by the fact that large numbers of people came around him: clearly they saw that he was going to teach. But there is a limit to the number of people who can crowd on a beach with comfort to the teacher, so Jesus got into a boat and sat there, while the people stood on the shore. Mostly in this Gospel lengthy pieces of teaching are addressed to disciples, but this one is aimed at the crowds.

3. Define parable.

It was apparently quite a long discourse, for Jesus told them *many things*. This is Matthew's first use of the term *parable* (though, as we have noted, some of the teaching he has recorded is of a parabolic nature, e.g., Matthew 7:24–27). There are several parables in this chapter, but we cannot be sure that they were all spoken on this one occasion. It seems more likely that Matthew has given us the information that it was a long discourse, making extensive use of parables, and that he has given us a sample of what Jesus said and added other parables. The word "parable" is hard to pin down. We use it mostly for a story taken from this life that conveys spiritual truth, and it certainly is used in this way. But it may also denote a short, pithy saying, a wise saying. Not much, however, turns on our definition. It is more important to notice what Jesus said and what it means to us.

4. For each kind of soil in Matthew 13:3-8, tell where the seed fell and what happened to it.

- **Path**

In the process of sowing the seeds fell into a variety of situations with diverse results for the crop. Jesus begins with those seeds that fell on hard places. In those days plots of ground were not, of course, fenced off, and people seem regularly to have gone on their journeys through the fields as well as around them. There were paths that ran through the fields, and when the sower was scattering his seed it was inevitable that some of it would fall on or close beside such paths. Since there was no soft soil there in which the seeds might sink, they remained where the birds could reach them and they were speedily devoured.

- **Rocky**

Others fell into stony ground. This will mean not ground littered with stones, but ground where the bedrock came close to the surface, with the result that these seeds had no depth of soil. There would have been a small amount over the bedrock, but not enough to sustain full growth. This did not stop a promising beginning, for *immediately* these seeds *sprouted*. "Because" is unexpected; but the shallow soil would have warmed quickly and encouraged rapid growth. But in that it had *no depth of soil* there was no future for any plant in this position.

When the sun rose is not to be taken with strict literalness: the sun rose every day, and the meaning is not that the plant withered the day after the seed was sown; the reference is rather to hot days that came early in the plants' life. When this happened the little plants *were scorched and withered away*. Where the previous verse said they had no "depth of soil," this one says they had no *root*; but this amounts to much the same. Plants that grow in rocky places

seem all right at first, but they soon wither away. Lacking abundance of soil the roots cannot develop, and plants with defective root systems are not equipped to stand hot weather. They wither away.

- **Thorns**

Jesus moves on to seeds that lodged where thorny bushes were growing. The point about these plants is that they were sturdy, robust plants, not easily to be defeated in the struggle for life. The plants as such would be ploughed in with the good seeds, but they would have their own seeds or pieces of roots that would enable them to spring into growth. So the good seeds found intense competition for the nourishment in the soil, and the thorny plants were too strong. They *choked* out the new plants by preventing them from getting the nourishment they needed.

- **Good soil**

Finally we come to the seeds that fell on good soil. Matthew uses this word *good* more than do other writers; it has the notion of “beautiful” about it. Good seed going into good ground bears a good crop. The magnitude varies from *a hundredfold* (cf. Genesis 26:12) down to *thirtyfold*. The first mentioned is an extraordinary crop, but even thirtyfold is very good.

5. What does Jesus mean in Matthew 13:9 when he talks about ears and hearing? (All humans have ears but not all hear)

This verse is identical with Matthew 11:15. Jesus invites his hearers to think through what he has said. It is a responsibility easily overlooked. Great words like “repent,” “believe,” and “do good” strike a chord, but in every age it has been easy not to take care how or what we hear.

6. How should we respond to this parable? What self-reflective questions should we be asking ourselves?
7. How do we grow individually and corporately as Christians?
8. Has the ‘seed’ been growing in your walk with Jesus? What growth have you noticed throughout the year? What growth would you ask the Holy Spirit to help with?

9. Pastor Ray, in his sermon, addressed that our heads and hearts can be distracted by the world, how can we encourage each other to remain focused on God's Word?