

JESUS TEACHES ON HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR BIBLE

- 1) **The foundation and starting place for everything in the Christian life** - Mark 4:14 - "The sower sows the word." - Clearly, the seed represents the Word of God (for an even clearer statement of this truth see the same parable in **Luke 8:11**). Jesus is saying ***the Word is the starting place for everything else that God wants to see developed spiritually in my life.***

Somewhere along the way all growth begins with seeds. The same is true in Christ's Kingdom. The Christian Faith begins, not with human opinion, human experience, or man's religious quest. It begins with revelation from God - absolute, objective, revealed truth that has full authority.

"The marks of truth as Christianly conceived, then, are: that it is supernaturally grounded, not developed within nature; that it is objective and not subjective; that it is a revelation and not a construction; that it is discovered by inquiry and not elected by a majority vote; that it is authoritative and not a matter of personal choice" (**The Christian Mind** - by Harry Blamires - page 107).

This is how you can tell if you're thinking like a Christian thinks - loving God with all your ***mind***. Blamires isn't talking primarily about the ***content*** of your thoughts here (though that's very important). He's talking about the ***process*** of your thinking. He's talking about how you arrive at truth and think rightly about God and everything else that's important in life.

- 2) **The power of the Word of God in my life is affected by my response** - This is a parable about religious people - church goers. It is all about lost opportunities for permanent, life producing changes by God in my heart. In three out of four cases (the vast majority) the Word never does all that God would have liked. Faith does come by hearing (**Romans 10:17**). But hearing involves more than merely ***reading*** or ***quoting***. ***Exposure*** does not guarantee ***transformation***.
- 3) **Spiritual soil samples** - Mark 4:4-8 - "....And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. [5] Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. [6] And when the sun rose it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. [7] Other seed

fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. [8] And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

Jesus analyzes some of our most common areas of neglect and error:

- a) **Wayside soil** - Mark 4:4 - "...And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it." This soil had become hard and packed down. Perhaps through some difficult, disappointing experience, or, more likely, some areas of indifference to truth already heard but not yielded to. For whatever reason, the seed couldn't penetrate. James would describe these people as "**hearers only**" (James 1:22). To listen without hearing is a fatal mistake. It closes up my life to the fruitfulness that the Spirit would like to bring through His Word. The **benefit** of the Word is vulnerable to being snatched away, profiting me nothing at all.

See also Proverbs 3:5-6 - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.[6] In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." Notice that one simply cannot rely **both** on the Lord and on self. Divine wisdom only penetrates soft, humble hearts.

- b) **Stony soil** - Mark 4:5-6 - "Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. [6] And when the sun rose it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away." How Jesus understands our hearts! Here He points out the problem of fast starts and poor finishes. This soil represents the person who makes a thrilling start in the Christian life. There's excitement, emotion, and the exhilaration of new life in Christ.

But, as always, the time soon comes to **live out the implications of that joyous commitment**, usually in the face of opposition, trial or persecution. At this point in Jesus' parable the commitment is seen to be all froth. Through a lack of proper understanding or lack of support and instruction, this person has no staying power.

But Jesus goes even deeper here. He says there were rocks down under the surface of the life (Mark 4:16-17). This is very important. There were obstacles in the **unseen** parts of the life, perhaps things **that were never properly dealt with at the time of**

conversion (underscoring the problem of a rushed, emotional start). We learn here that what's under the surface of the life will not remain unseen. It will cost at some point down the road.

- c) **Thorny soil** - Mark 4:7 - **“Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.”** The seed isn't the only thing that will grow in the soil. Growth of all kinds takes place in the human heart and mind. Greed, temper, bitterness, lust, and stubbornness will all flourish. Jesus is saying that many of our spiritual problems stem from the fact that we aren't good enough at weeding - eliminating things right away that will one day be impossible to overcome and root out.

Jesus doesn't leave us to guess what these thorns might be. He names them clearly in **Luke 8:14** - **“And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.”**

- d) **Fruitful soil** - Mark 4:8 - **“And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”** This heart is described in **Luke 8:15** - **“As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.”**

Above all, this soil is receptive and responsive to the Word. The seed got under the surface. It had no obstacles to overcome and no weeds to compete with for nourishment. Also, the seed was embraced with endurance and patience. For a perfect picture of what this fruitful life in Jesus is all about see **John 15: 1-11**.

- 4) **The cost of not abiding** - Mark 4:11-12 - **“And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, [12] so that ‘they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.’”**

In love, Jesus points out the drastic consequence of not yielding to the Word. In short, you lose the very ability to ever respond rightly to the Word in the future. You poke your spiritual eyes out. The heart grows hard. The lesson here is to respond to Christ immediately in any area of life. The longer I wait, the less likely I am to see the light. The chances diminish with the passing of time.