

## Luke 8:1-15: Parable of the Sower

I don't know much about sowing seed like a farmer. But I have sown grass seed on barren patches of lawn. Some seed falls on the road and birds eat it. Some on very hard soil. Some seed when watered takes root and fills in the barren patch.

Read 8:1-15. The context (verses 1-3) is Jesus preaching the kingdom of God in villages. Jesus was sowing the seed of God's word, the good news of the kingdom of God, and he observed 4 responses. *(Take notice of all the women following Jesus and supporting his ministry. They followed Jesus because he delivered them from diseases and demons.)*

Seed = the word of God. Soil = where the seed falls (path, rocks, thorns, good soil) represents a person's response to the word of God. There are 4 responses to the word of God.

First person: The seed fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. This represents the devil stealing the word of God from people's hearts, so that they will not believe and be saved. This description tells us two truths: 1) a person must believe the word of God to be saved; 2) the devil can take the word of God from a person's heart.

How does the devil steal the word away from a person's heart? LIES. Jesus called Satan a liar and the father of lies. Jesus said to the religious leaders who wanted to kill him, John 8:44: *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* Satan has one tool in his evil toolbox – lies. Satan lied to Adam & Eve. God said, "If you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil then you will die." Satan contradicted God's word with a lie, "You will not surely die." A & E were deceived, but deception is an effect. It's a matter of cause and effect. The cause is Satan's lies and the effect is deception. There are many deceived people who believe Satan's lies.

In the scripture where Jesus called himself the good shepherd and the door to the sheepfold, he warned about Satan. John 10:10: "The thief - *Satan* - comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I - *Jesus* - came that they - *YOU and ME* - may have life and have it abundantly." On Friday I believed a lie and was deceived by a scam. Just as money was stolen from me because I believed a lie and was deceived, Satan will tell you lies and steal the word of God from your heart.

Satan has a lie for every truth of God's word. God's word: "In the beginning, God created..." Satan's lie: "There is no God. Everything evolved out of nothing." (The evolution lie is very

unscientific!) God's word, "God created man in his own image, male and female he created them." Satan's lie, "Forget about biology. You can choose your gender." God's Word: "For all have sinned and fall short of God's glory." Satan's lie: "You are not a sinner. Nobody is perfect. Everybody makes some mistakes." God's Word: "Jesus is not here; he is risen!" Satan's lie: "The resurrection never happened; it's a myth." Satan steals the word of God from people's hearts with lies. If they do not believe the word of God, they are not saved and will go to hell.

Second person: Some seed fell on rocks, and as it grew it withered away, because it had no moisture. This represents people hear the word of God and receive it with joy. The seed doesn't have deep soil in the heart to put down roots. These people believe at first but when they are tested they fall away. Here's one important truth: A person's belief in the word of God will be tested. The person falls away in a time of testing. The GR word for "fall away" = apostasy.

What is the nature of the testing that causes a person to fall away? The testing could be persecution, the fear of man, seeking human approval, unconfessed sin, unforsaken bad habits, immorality, unmet expectations, and rejection of the authority of Scripture.

- Christian teenagers who attend secular university without any knowledge of apologetics (apologetic roots) can fall away from the faith when questioned by agnostic or atheist professors or be fooled by the identity politics on campus.
- The pressure of persecution may cause them to fall away. When the great persecution of Roman Emperor Nero happened 64AD some Christians apostatized to escape torture and death. Christians were persecuted until Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity in 313AD. Today, Muslims who become Christians are persecuted or killed by family members. You know Christians in China are persecuted.
- There is apostasy in the church. Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformers considered the Roman Catholic Church to be *The Great Apostasy*. There will be another great apostasy with the Antichrist before the second coming of Jesus Christ. This end time's apostasy is here now; it's called progressive (liberal) Christianity in Protestant churches. The doctrine of progressive Christianity rejects human depravity and the atonement of Christ. Progressive Christianity rejects biblical morality. It is a false religion created by the sinful nature of man and Satan.
- Personal testing: My sister-in-law's new faith is being tested by bacteria in her kidney transplant. My wife is there helping her put down roots into God's word. Every time we pray and rebuke the bad bacteria in her kidney and her number goes down, her faith is strengthened.

First and second people who hear the word of God have no salvation.

Third person: Some seed fell among thorns and was choked. This represents people who hear and believe the word of God, but their faith is choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life. This person has salvation but doesn't mature in the faith. They may grow fruit, but it doesn't mature. (Have you ever seen a fruit tree grow immature fruit? The maturation of fruit is a natural process.) The reason the seed of God's word doesn't grow into mature fruit is the thorns of this world.

Jesus mentions 3 thorn bushes that hinder maturity and block the growth of fruit:

Thorn bush #1 - cares/worries: Anxiety stifles Christian growth because it is not trusting God. (*An example of this in Jesus' ministry is Martha & Mary: Luke 10:38-42.*) Millennials are now called "The Anxious Generation" – 30% experience general anxiety; 12% have a diagnosed anxiety disorder. Anxiety was the most prevalent self-reported mental health diagnosis among college students: 60% of college students experience frequent anxiety. Approximately 32% of 13 to 17-year-olds will experience an anxiety disorder. How do we overcome anxiety and gain maturity? Read **Matthew 6:25-34**. Live one day at a time and seek God's kingdom and righteousness.

Thorn bush #2 - riches/wealth: The GR word refers to wealth. It refers to money and everything money can buy. It refers to the *love* of money, not the money we need to live every day and buy food and pay bills or your retirement plan. I would like to win the lottery and millions of dollars, but I wonder what that would do to my Christian growth? Would I use it to buy bigger houses, faster cars, and more vacations to exotic places? Or would I use it to fund Christ's Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations? (*An example of this in Jesus' ministry is the rich ruler: Luke 18:18-30.*) How do we overcome the love of money and gain Christian maturity? Read **Matthew 6:19-21**. Storing up treasure in heaven in growing in maturity. Generosity, giving to your church and Christian ministries that obey Christ's Great Commission, is gaining maturity.

Thorn bush #3 - pleasures of this world: Pursuing the pleasures of this world stifles Christian maturity. This refers to satisfying physical desires/appetites – food, sex, and entertainment. These things are gifts of God to be enjoyed in this world, but an inordinate focus and pursuit of them will hinder maturity. How many days a week do you eat out and spend a lot of money? How often do you drink Starbucks? How much TV do you watch? Do you really need iPhone XS, XR? (*I was in the Germantown Apple store yesterday. It's cool and attractive! It was packed with people buying the latest Apple products.*) Do we really need 5G? Do we really need to download movies in 2 seconds – R-rated movies with profanity, immoral sex, and violence? Do we really need what is bigger, better, and faster? When will our appetites be satisfied? Pornography is a trap for young men and definitely stifles Christian

maturity. (A research study by Barna Research revealed that 68% of Christian men view porn on a regular basis: <https://www.barna.com/the-porn-phenomenon>.) Read **Matthew 6:22-24**. Self-control, the fruit of the Spirit, is Christian maturity.

Attending church on Sunday is not an accurate measure of spiritual maturity. (*I heard a Bellevue pastor say the church considers people who attend at least 2 Sundays a month “regular attenders.” That’s immaturity.*) There are Christians who attend church every Sunday but produce very little fruit or none. Would you want to be an adolescent your whole life and never grow up? Some Christians are spiritual adolescents who haven’t matured.

Fourth person: Some seed fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold. This represents people who hear and receive the word of God in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast (retain it), and then bear fruit with perseverance. They become mature in their faith.

Here’s the meaning: If you bring a good and honest heart to the hearing (or reading) of the Word, then you will retain the Word, and bear fruit as you persevere in the faith.

Bearing fruit begins with an honest and good heart. An honest and good heart is a heart free from the things that hinder spiritual maturity - anxiety, the love of money, and the allure of worldly pleasures. It’s a heart open and eager to receive the truth of God’s Word and obey it. ~ An honest and good heart hears or reads the Word of God – like you are right now – and then holds on to it. This person receives the Word of God and retains it. We can retain the Word by daily reading it (devotional time), memorizing it, and obeying it. Obedience is essential to retaining it.

Being good soil for the Word of God and bearing fruit also requires endurance or perseverance. Endurance is required because of the temptation of worries, riches, and pleasures. For many Christians in Asia and Africa, endurance is required because of persecution. Farmers must endure drought, storm, and flood to produce a crop. We must endure tests of our faith. Maturity doesn’t come easy. It requires endurance.

**“Mature Christians know the ability to abstain from anything that impedes their relationship with Christ is true freedom.”** ~ *Renew Church Baton Rouge-Pastor Checkerz Williams*

Optional (time permitting): What is the fruit? Let’s look at how Jesus used the *fruit metaphor* to understand what he had in mind – what he was referring to.

The fruit is a result of abiding in Christ: John 15:5: *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* Mature Christians abide in Christ. Bearing fruit is keeping Christ’s

commandments. John 15:10, 12: *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love... This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* Christ gave 2 commandments: 1) Love one another as I have loved you (15:12); 2) Go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

Mature Christians ask for things that glorify Christ and advance his kingdom and accomplish his purposes in the world. John 15:7-8, 16: *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples... You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.* Abide in Christ and obey his commands and you will bear fruit that glorifies God.

#### Applications:

**First**, our work is to sow. We have no control over how the seed of the word of God is received in a human heart. The soil's reception of the seed is determined by the sovereign will and work of the Holy Spirit. It is the work of the HS to convict of sin and the need for Christ's righteousness.

**Second**, which response to the word of God represents you? I hope it isn't the first two. If it is then this seed of the Word will be stolen from your heart or not take root. Then you will not believe and have salvation. I hope you haven't remained immature due to anxiety, the love of money, or pursuing the pleasures of this world. I hope you are maturing and bearing fruit. I hope you yield a hundredfold - a hundred times as much. I hope 100 people greet you in heaven and say, "Thank you for sharing the gospel with me so I became a Christian," or "Thank you for teaching me as a disciple in the Christian faith." Influence at least 100 people for Christ! Sow the seed of the word of God at home, at work, when you exercise, run a half-marathon, or eat out.