

## Three Stories

**Mark 4:9** Jesus said “He who has ears to hear, let him hear”.

**Lesson:** Read Mark 4:14-20

➤ **What is the seed in this parable? Who is the farmer? What other characters are seen in this story?**

The seed in this parable is the Word of God. The farmer is God who plants the seed of His Word in each of our hearts – if the soil of our hearts is ready for it. Other characters include Jesus, the Master Storyteller, of course, but we also see that there must be an audience and verse 10 says that the audience consisted of the Twelve and some others. Not sure exactly who all was listening, but we know that it was a select few to whom Jesus explained the meaning of the parable. Jesus describes four kinds of people as characters in the story and they are us! Let’s not forget about Satan. This is a spiritual battle that Jesus is describing, not planting tomatoes! Let’s not get lost in the analogy and the skill with which He tells a story and forget the point. God has planted the Word in us and the enemy is trying to take it away, distract us or harden our hearts. This is a fight to keep the Word and to allow it to change our lives.

➤ **What kinds of soil are described and how do we evidence each of them in our lives at different times?**

The Hard Soil or the packed down path refers to people with hard hearts. When we don’t want to listen or accept the Word of God, we are hard hearted people. Some verses are more difficult than others maybe, but choosing to ignore them is demonstrating hard soil in our lives and allowing Satan to snatch away our blessing. The Rocky Soil is an emotional response that is temporary. Sometimes we hear the Word and get excited about it, but it doesn’t really sink in. It looks good from the outside, but as soon as there are any trials at all, we blow off what we have learned and fall away. Maybe that happens sometimes when we hear the Word, but don’t meditate on it and how it can change our lives. The transformation starts with obedience to the Word. The Thorny Soil reminds us of a distracted person or one with divided loyalties. We hear the Word and make a commitment to obey what we’ve heard, but then we get busy with the pressures of life and we forget. When we worry about life, when we focus on financial gain and when we want other things, doesn’t that evidence a lack of trust in God? If we are truly leaning on Him, then we don’t worry about finances, life or anything else. The Bible describes in verse 19 the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things that choke the Word making it unfruitful. Satan wants to have each of us ignore the Word – not accept it at all. If he can’t have that then he wants it to not really take root and transform our lives. If he can’t have that then the next best thing is a Christian who doesn’t reproduce. Satan figures at least it won’t go any further and set up that ripple effect. He knows one piece of fruit contains multiple seeds so the growth potential is exponential and he will do anything to stop that. Jesus said, thirty, sixty, some a hundred times what was sown. We display all these kinds of soil or heart attitudes at different times in our lives. In all cases, it seems like the response is to focus on God. Spend more time together and allow Him to speak to us. Concentrate on Him and avoid the distractions of the world.

➤ **What kind of soil are you? What kind do you want to be? *What are you going to do about it?!***

Allow people to share where they are in life. Surely everyone wants to be Fertile Soil (if not then maybe they are actually Hard Soil!), but that may not be where we are right now. As a group discuss actual, realistic things you can do to be fertile soil (Ask God to make you fertile soil, spend time with Him, join and maintain involvement in a small group for encouragement and accountability, etc....)

## Daily Devotional Reading:

- Day #1: Titus 1
  - Focusing on God and responding to His Word:
  
- Day #2: Titus 2
  - Focusing on God and responding to His Word:
  
- Day #3: Titus 3
  - Focusing on God and responding to His Word:
  
- Day #4: Philemon
  - Focusing on God and responding to His Word:
  
- Day #5: 2 Corinthians 7
  - Focusing on God and responding to His Word: