

# Making A Difference

## Sowing the Seed of the Gospel

*"14 The farmer plants seed by taking God's word to others.... 20 And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!" Mark 4:14, 20 NLT*

- *Would you like to be used by God to influence people's lives for eternity?*



Jesus often used the analogy of planting and harvesting to illustrate spiritual truths. In the parable of Mark 4:3-20, the **seed** symbolizes the gospel (4:14 and Luke 8:11). The different **soils** represent people's hearts.

This parable may be **the most important one** that Jesus gave. Jesus said: *"...if you can't understand the meaning of this parable, how will you understand all the other parables?"* (Mark 4:13 NLT). Jesus tells us how to make our lives count for something eternal. How to **make a difference** in someone's forever.

### The Central Lesson and Application:

We are to continually plant the seed of the gospel in the soil of people's hearts & leave the results to God.

### The Parable of the Four Soils - Mark 4:1-20

1. **The followers of Christ are called to **PLANT** the seed of the gospel in the soil of people's hearts (v.14).**

It is estimated that only 3 percent of all lost people come to church on their own initiative. This leaves 97 percent to be cultivated and reached by other means. Just as the farmer sows his seed by casting it across his fields, **we should sow the gospel seed as we go throughout our day and meet people.** We are called to plant the seed of the gospel in the soil of human hearts. *In what ways can you cast the gospel seed throughout society?*

2. **People will respond to the gospel in **DIFFERENT** ways, and they are **ACCOUNTABLE** to God for their **OWN** response.**
  - **The **HARD** Heart** - Some people **reject** the gospel because they are indifferent (v.15).
  - **The **HAPPY** Heart (Emotional)** - Some people are **emotionally moved** by the gospel but do not genuinely receive it (vs. 16-17).
  - **The **HALF-HEARTED** Heart** - Some people **appreciate** the gospel but are too **distracted** with life's problems or **enticed** by life's pleasures to commit themselves. They are half-hearted (vs. 18-19).
  - **The **HUNGRY** Heart** - Some people **fully receive** it and are transformed. They **make a difference** for someone's forever (v.20).

Bible Teacher, Warren Wiersbe, explains: **"This heart [the receptive fruitful heart] pictures the true believer, because fruit - a changed life - is the evidence of true salvation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 5:19-23). The other three hearts produced no fruit, so we conclude that they belong to persons who have never been born again. Not all true believers are equally as productive, but from every genuine Christian's life, there will be some evidence of spiritual fruit."** *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*, p.100.

3. **The sower has no control over how people respond to the gospel seed, but he does have control over the **FREQUENCY** and **MANNER** of sowing the seed.**

**Our job** - is to plant the gospel seed. **God's job** - is to bring people to Himself through the seed we planted. We will give an account to God for the sowing, not the response (cf. Matthew 25:14-29, esp. v.19 *"...called them to give an account..."* Also 2 Cor. 5:10 ).

4. **A **SMALL** investment of our time and effort can have exponential returns for God's kingdom (v.20).**

A small amount of seed produced 30, 60, or 100 times more than what was planted. There are **different levels of spiritual impact** and **fruitfulness** in people's lives that can result from a seemingly small effort on our part. Maybe it was an encouraging word, a time we prayed for them, an occasion we gave them a Bible or a Christian book, a time we shared our testimony or a gospel explanation. It appeared to have little influence, but their hearts were forever changed. Little becomes much in God's hands. The man who led Billy Graham to Christ had no idea what his witness would accomplish. The next Billy Graham may be waiting for your witness..

### The Definition of Successful Witnessing

Take the **INITIATIVE** to share the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and leave the **RESULTS** to God.

### Levels of Involvement (Ways of Witnessing ANYONE Can Do)

#### LEVEL 1 - Little or No Training

- **Distribute** gospel literature, New Testaments, CDs, etc.
- **Invite** people to church, small groups, or events where the gospel is presented.
- (Matthew Party) **Host** a gathering (cookout, dinner, party, etc.) where believers and nonbelievers can socialize. Someone shares their testimony & explains the gospel or shows a gospel DVD - "The Case for Christ," etc.

#### LEVEL 2 - Moderate Training

- Share the **three words** to becoming a Christian: **Apologize, Accept, & Trust.**
- Share your **testimony** of salvation - verbal, a letter, notes, pamphlet, etc.
- Share the **Three Circles, the Bridge to God, Peace with God, The Four Spiritual Laws**, and/or other gospel explanations, etc.

#### LEVEL 3 - Advance Training

- Share the gospel with people in **false religions, cults, skeptics, atheists**, etc.

### Conversation Starters

- *Do you ever think about spiritual matters?*
- *What is your religious background? Do you attend church anywhere?*
- *How much of the Bible have you read?*
- *Do you **know for sure** that you are going to heaven, or is this something you are still seeking to determine?*
- *If God were to ask you, "**Why should I let you into heaven?**" What do you think you would say?*
- *May I share with you how we can know for sure we are going to heaven? Or, Have you seen the Three Circles? May I share it with you?*

**Conclusion - We are to continually plant the seed of the gospel in the soil of people's hearts & leave the results to God.**

**Suggested prayer:** "Heavenly Father, I realize there are people all around me who have not experienced Your love, forgiveness, & salvation. I know You want me to tell them. Please fill me with the Holy Spirit & a deep burden for lost people. Help me to sow the seed of the gospel in others. Please give me the privilege to lead someone to You. In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen."