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## **A Question Of Soil**

**LUKE 8:4-15**

### **Introduction**

1. This past week one of our members was talking with me about how hard the soil was in his yard.
2. He had noticed that some of the things he had planted were beginning to die from root rot because the soil was so hard that the water was not draining away from the holes he had dug to plant them, thus causing the roots to rot.
3. He finally had to remove the plants, enlarge the hole, put gravel in the bottom and dig a small trench which he lined with gravel in order for the excess water to drain away.
4. The condition of the soil is very important to the health and productivity of anything we may choose to plant, whether we are farmers, backyard gardeners or just someone putting out a few shrubs or young trees.
5. In chapter eight of his gospel, Luke tells us about a time when a large crowd was gathering and people from the various cities around were coming to hear Jesus.
6. The truth is, people were always coming to hear Jesus.
7. His concern was that they would listen and respond properly.
8. So, Jesus told a parable about a farmer who went out to sow seed.
9. In reality, this parable is about hearts, yours, mine and others around us and how those hearts respond to His Word.
10. This past week a number of you came to the building every day and went out with the various individuals and families who came from as far away as Illinois, Texas and Alabama in order to share the Gospel with many here in our community.
9. Like Jesus, we too were looking for those who would listen and respond positively to God's message.

10. This morning, I would like to quickly go back through the parable which Jesus told before we look at His explanation.
11. As we do this, I would like for each of you to ask yourselves, "Which soil best represents my heart?"

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## **I. The Parable of the Sower**

### **A. THE SOWER SOWS HIS SEED**

"The sower went out to sow his seed . . ." (Luke 8:5).

1. This simple farmer went out one day to sow seed, perhaps wheat, in his field.
2. He was nothing like that which we see around today's farms.
3. No tractor with some kind of mechanized spreader behind him.
4. Instead, he had a seed bag hanging by a strap from his shoulder or tied to his waist, filled with as much seed as it would hold.
5. As he went along, he would take a handful of seed and broadcast it upon his field.
6. He seed fell wherever his hand and the wind sent it.

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### **B. THE PLACES IN WHICH THE SEED FELL**

1. "Beside the road" (v. 5).

" . . . it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up" (Luke 8:5b).

  - a. People trampled it under their feet as they walked along the road.
  - b. The birds feasted on whatever they found.
  - c. It never had the chance to even take root, so it never produced anything.

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2. "On rocky soil" (v. 6).

“ . . . as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture”  
(Luke 8:6b).

- a. This seed took quickly sprouted because the soil was warm with the layer of bedrock just below the surface.
- b. However, as the temperatures grew warmer each day, it soon withered because the hot Palestinian sun soon dried up an moisture from which it might draw nourishment.
- c. Because it withered and died, it never produced any crop.

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3. “Among thorns” (v. 7).

“ . . . the thorns grew up with it and choked it out” (Luke 8:7b).

- a. As both the farmer’s seed and the thorns grew, the thorns quickly began to take over and choke out the tender plants from the farmer’s seed.
- b. How many of us have seen a blackberry patch take over an area in a field where perhaps a farmer intended to cut hay?
- c. As with the seed which fell on the two other types of soil this didn’t produce anything either.

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4. “Into the good soil” (v. 8).

“Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great” (Luke 8:8).

- a. The seed sown on this soil took root, grew up and produced a crop.
- b. On this occasion Jesus said it was “a crop a hundred times as great” as the amount of seed the farmer had sown there.

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## **II. The Parable Explained**

## **A. "THE SEED"**

"The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11).

1. It is seed of the best quality — it comes from God Himself (2 Timothy 2:15).

"All Scripture is inspired by God (lit. God-breathed)" (2 Timothy 2:15a).

2. It is powerful (Hebrews 4:12).

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12, NASB95)

3. James said that if we will "in humility receive" this word implanted within us, it "is able to save our souls" (James 1:21).

4. God's word divides people into two groups:

- a. Those who commit themselves to Jesus and His teaching and thus have access to understanding His truth.
- b. Others who hear a story, but do not comprehend its meaning — "seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand" (v. 10b) — they see physically but not spiritually, they hear words but do not understand the message behind the words.

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## **B. WHERE ARE WE IN THE FIELD?**

1. Those "beside the road" (v. 12) — seed stolen by the devil.

"Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved." (Luke 8:12, NASB95)

- a. This seed never has a chance to germinate.

- b. God and Satan want two different things in our lives:
  - 1) God does not wish for any of us to perish but for all of us to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).
  - 2) Satan is always seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8) — his goal is to prevent belief.
- c. A spiritual battle takes place when God's Word is proclaimed.
- d. Satan works to prevent the message of God's Word from taking root in our hearts.

“. . . he takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12b).
- d. If he is successful, any opportunity for faith and salvation is lost — hearing is the only thing that happens.
- e. I imagine that all of us know of someone to whom this has happened, perhaps even someone within our own family.
- f. If you know such a person, please pray for them and their heart, that God might make it receptive to His truth.

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- 2. Those “on the rocky soil” (v. 13) — seed without root.

“Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.” (Luke 8:13, NASB95)

- a. There is a genuine response, an initial joyous reception of the message.
- b. However, it is a reception which has no depth, “no firm root.”
- c. There is faith for a short period of time, but in times of testing or trials they fall away.
- d. Peter recognized in his first letter that some of those Christians in Asia Minor had “been distressed by various trials” (1 Peter 1:6).
- e. He encouraged them to remain faithful and promised that “the proof of

[their] faith” **would** “result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7).

- f. **Later in that letter, Peter wrote** “if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name” (1 Peter 1:16).

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- 3. Those “which fell among the thorns” (v. 14) — **seed choked by worry, riches and pleasures.**

“The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.” (Luke 8:14, NASB95)

- a. There are those who hear the word of God, but their excessive concerns for earthly affairs and pleasures prevent it from truly accomplishing anything in their lives.
- b. When we are distracted by what we see around us, our heart struggles with divided loyalties.
- c. We start out showing some interest in Christ, but in time, we are pulled in other directions, leaving no room for spiritual matters.
- c. This isn’t something which happens suddenly, but gradually, over time.
- e. This is what happened to one of Paul’s “fellow workers,” a man by the name of Demas:
  - 1) In Paul’s letter to Philemon, he referred to Demas as one of his fellow workers.
  - 2) In his letter to the Christians in Colosse, Paul included greetings from Luke and Demas (Colossians 4:14).
  - 3) However, in his last letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, “Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica” (2 Timothy 4:10).
- f. **Don’t let this happen to you.**

- g. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, after telling his listeners not to worry about the necessities of life said,

“ . . . for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:31-33, NASB95)

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- 4. Those “in the good soil” (v. 15) — seed in an honest and good heart.

“But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.” (Luke 8:15, NASB95)

- a. Seed in this soil is successful. It bears much fruit.
- b. What makes the difference? Three things:
  - 1) You have “an honest and good heart.”
  - 2) You “hold fast” (cling) to God’s word.
  - 3) You persevere in living a faithful life.
    - a) You bear up under the pressure of living a faithful life.
    - b) “. . . we exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope” (Romans 5:3-4).

## **Conclusion**

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- 1. I would like to bring you back to the question with which we started this morning: “Which soil best represents your heart?”
- 2. Are you the soil “beside the road”?
  - a. Has Satan been taking away God’s word from your heart so that you really haven’t heard anything which I have said this morning?

- b. If so, ask someone to begin praying for you now, so that God will keep Satan from stealing God's message from you.
- 3. Are you "the rocky soil"?
  - a. If so, I am glad for your initial reception of God's word and the joy which you felt when you first obeyed the gospel.
  - b. However, ask God to help you "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18), so that you will be overcome by the trials and temptations which will come your way.
- 4. Are you surrounded by thorns?
  - a. Ask those brothers and sisters in Christ to whom you feel the closest to pray for you so that you might keep your focus on the things of God.
  - b. Also ask them keep an eye on you and pull you back if they see you drifting away.
- 5. Are you "the good soil?"
  - a. May God continue to bless your life so that more precious souls may be brought to him through you.
- 6. If God's Word is working in your heart this morning and encouraging you to obey the gospel, don't turn a deaf ear.
- 7. Choose right now to turn from your sin and confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.
- 8. Get up, come forward, as wash away your sin, calling on His name!