

FARMERS FOR THE LORD

INTRODUCTION: THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Matthew 13:1-23

- I. The overall theme of this year's VBS will be the Parable of the Sower.
- II. This parable has one central lesson: to teach about the different kinds of hearts that men may possess.
- III. Thus, each lesson will focus on one type of soil/heart by studying an example from the New Testament that demonstrates the characteristics taught by Jesus.
 - A. The **Wayside Soil** is illustrated by the example of King Agrippa (Acts 26).
 - B. The **Stony Soil** is illustrated by the Rich Young Ruler (Matt. 19:16-22) and by Demas (2 Tim. 4:10).
 - C. The **Thorny Soil** is illustrated by Judas (Matt. 26; John 13, 18).
 - D. The **Good Soil** is illustrated by the Hears on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and by the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8).
- IV. The last lesson of our VBS will focus on bearing fruit and reaping the harvest; thus, we will study the Vine and the Branches (John 15) and the hope of Heaven.
- V. As each lesson is studied, several important farming principles should be remembered.
 - A. The importance of preparing the soil – the heart.
 - B. The importance of planting the right seed – the Word of God.
 - C. The importance of cultivating the plant – one's faith and faithfulness.
 1. Protection – *the Christian armor, including prayer*
 2. Fertilization – *Bible study, daily*
 3. Watering – *Worship and fellowship*
 4. Weeding – *Discipline and doctrine*
 - D. The importance of growing the plant – maturing in grace and knowledge.
 - E. The importance of bearing fruit – holy character and good works.
- VI. It must be remembered that we are spiritual farmers for the Lord – to honor and glorify Him with lives that bear fruit individually and in the Lord's kingdom.

I. The Parable

- A. Seeing someone sow seed in this manner would be a common event for Jesus' audience.
- B. Seeing the results of the sowing on different types of soil would be common also.
- C. Seeing an abundant harvest from such sowing would be familiar to them.

II. The Purpose

- A. The purpose of this parable is to teach about the kinds of hearts men may possess.
 - 1. The Wayside Ground Hearer
 - a. His heart is unprepared – *He does not understand the word.*
 - b. He is listening but not grasping it (cf. Mt. 13:14-15).
 - c. Thus, the devil is able to instantly take away the impact of the word.
 - i. Those who hear with prejudice.
 - ii. Those who hear with worldliness.
 - iii. Those who hear with indifference.
 - iv. Those who hear with hypocrisy.
 - 2. The Stony Ground Hearer
 - a. His heart is prepared only slightly – *He hears with joy.*
 - b. He listens but does not develop strong convictions.
 - c. Thus, temptation and persecution wither the impact of the word.
 - i. Those who hear with emotionalism.
 - ii. Those who hear with blindness (cf. Luke 14:25-33).
 - iii. Those who hear with materialism (cf. John 6:26, 60, 66).
 - 3. The Thorny Ground Hearer
 - a. His heart is prepared and fertile – *He allows growth.*
 - b. He listens but does not cultivate his heart by weeding out all else.
 - c. Thus, worldly cares choke out the fruitful impact of the word.
 - i. Those who hear with worry (cf. Luke 10:38-42).
 - ii. Those who hear with doubt (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9).
 - iii. Those who hear with disloyalty.
 - 4. The Good Ground Hearer
 - a. His heart is prepared, fertile and cultivated.
 - b. He hears, obeys, grows and matures.
 - c. Thus, he brings forth much fruit in his life and in the lives of others.
- B. This parable would then serve two functions.
 - 1. It would explain why so many were trying to undermine Jesus' teaching.
 - 2. It would encourage His hearers to prepare their hearts for His teaching.

III. The Peripherals

- A. The Sower (cf. 1 Cor. 3:6; Ecc. 11:4-6; John 4:35-38; 2 Tim. 2:24-26)
- B. The Seed (cf. John 6:63; 1 Pet. 1:23; Gal. 6:7; Acts 11:26)