



March 3, 2024

Concerning Jesus (Mark 4) -Woody Morwood

This Discussion Guide is designed to help you **think more deeply** about the sermon and **engage with others** through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and **allow God to work** in your life as you apply what you discover.

➤ CONVERSATION STARTER

What is your favorite children's book or story? What do you like about it?

➤ EXPLORATION

As we read through the book of Mark it becomes clear that Jesus was a storyteller. He used stories to convey spiritual truths to those who were willing to listen deeply. In Mark chapter 4 Jesus gives four parables.

This week we will focus on the Parable of the Sower.

Mark 4:1-8 (From your bible, read aloud)

What does this passage tell us about the Kingdom of God?

You may have noticed that the passage begins with the word, "**Again** Jesus began to teach..." Throughout his ministry, Jesus taught about the good news of the Kingdom of God. This repetition is important because it was his mission to teach the people about the Kingdom of God.

Verse 3 begins with a command, "**Listen!**" Jesus wants to make sure that they know that this is an

important message. But, no matter how good the message, we still have to tune in and listen if we want to truly understand.

Even though they were listening, the disciples did not yet understand the meaning of the parable, so Jesus explains its meaning to them.

Mark 4:10-20 (From your bible, read aloud)

There is an interesting shift in the setting. Jesus graciously explains the meaning of the parable to his disciples. But he doesn't give the explanation to the crowd.

Why do you think Jesus explained the parable's meaning to his disciples only?

In his explanation of the parable Jesus compares the hearts of people to several different types of soil; the path, rocky soil, thorny soil and good soil. As we look more deeply at these descriptions, you may want to pause to evaluate the condition of your own heart. We all have areas where we need to grow. This parable gives us an opportunity to discover places that Jesus wants to work in our lives.

THE PATH (v.15)

"Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them."

Some people experience Satan as an active distractor and a destroyer of the word. John 10:10 tells us that Satan's goal is to steal, kill and destroy. Jesus came

bringing truth, but many were unwilling to let that truth change them. We see this clearly in Mark with the religious leaders as they refused to accept Jesus' teaching. It can happen just as easily to us today.

Soil Check - ask God to show you any ways that you are resistant to embracing the truth.

THE ROCKY SOIL (v.16-17)

“Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.”

Think about a time when you heard a really inspiring sermon and left church excited to put what you learned into practice. We have probably all had that kind of experience, and yet oftentimes our good intentions get forgotten as the week goes on.

The people in Jesus' day were no different. They witnessed amazing miracles and heard powerful teachings and yet, just like us, they quickly forgot about God's power when faced with the fear of persecution.

Soil Check - ask God to show you any ways that you respond in fear when faced with a challenge.

THE THORNY SOIL (v.18-19)

“Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.”

There are two stories in the book of Mark that illustrate this well; Herod killed John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-29) and the Rich Young Man walked away (Mark 10:17-31). Both of these men had seen and heard the message of Jesus and yet they chose to put their earthly desires above the truth.

There are so many modern day examples of this concept. Stress and anxiety can be overwhelming. The desire for comfort, status and success can be powerful motivators for how we live our lives. Jesus is

teaching a different way of life and a different way of handling this kind of pressure. Responding to life's challenges with faith and confidence only comes through the transforming work of God in our lives.

Soil Check - ask God to show you any ways that you choose your own comfort rather than trusting God with your life.

THE GOOD SOIL (v.20)

“Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown.”

Here we see what seed sown in good soil produces, an abundant harvest. There are examples throughout the book of Mark where we see people who were engaged and receptive to the teaching of Jesus. These people listened to his words and put them into action in their own lives.

Soil Check - ask God to show you the ways that you have responded to the gospel with faith and action, allowing God to produce abundant fruit in your life.

> TAKE AWAY

This Parable of the Sower highlights the condition of the soil in which the farmer “sows the word.” God's word is given generously, and yet each recipient responds to that word differently. Each different type of soil yields different levels of fruitfulness.

This parable gives us an invitation to examine our lives and to ask God to show us areas where we struggle to believe and obey what the bible teaches us. This is good practice for us. When we slow down and take a good look at how we are responding to God's word and make an honest assessment of our lives, we make room for God to work in us.

Take some time to share about the condition of the “soil” of your life. When you face adversity, what is your typical response?

Pray together, asking God to cultivate the soil of your heart so that your life will produce good fruit for the Kingdom.