

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. ***Enjoy discovering more about Him!***

"BE CAREFUL HOW YOU HEAR" | LUKE 8:4-8:21 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

What movie, song or story best goes with the idea of farming and crops?

"Truth is For Hearing" (Luke 8: 4-15)

Jesus tells a story about sowing seeds on 4 types of soil to show heart conditions impact how God's Truth is received: the Hard Heart, the Shallow Heart, the Crowded Heart and the Fruitful Heart. **What are ways to prepare our hearts and those around us to receive God's Truth well?**

"Light is for Seeing" (Luke 8: 16-18)

Jesus encourages his followers to share what they've seen and learned with others, not to keep it hidden for themselves. **Why do many people keep God's truth hidden?**

"Spiritual Family for Enduring" (Luke 8: 19-21)

Jesus describes the new family, the family of God which is characterized by obedience to God the Father. **What are ways a spiritual family will have more in common than a natural/earthly family?**

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Jesus' parable about soils challenges people to examine their hearts. **What condition is the "soil" of your heart lately? How has that affect how you respond to God's Word and Truth? Pray and ask God work on your heart and to show you how to be more fruitful sin living out your faith.**

Be Careful How You Hear

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2-6 Tony: Fam Nite. Women's Worship. CG. Unfolding Gospel. Mem Day.
- B. Slide7 Israel Informational Mtg: I'm hosting an Israel Info Mtg next Sun, June 5 at 5:30pm (hour b4 Prayer Mtg) in Agape room. *I can answer questions and share about what makes this trip so unique.*
- C. *Also, there is a couple that is blind, lives near the Bible College, that is looking for a ride to church on Sundays. Maybe a couple families could do this. Call/see *Jessica or Dawn* in the front office for details.
- D. Baby Bottles (funds for L.E Pregnancy Center) we've collected \$3500 so far, (w/o counting all the change)
- E. Slide8 Memorial Day: We pay tribute, commemorate, & remember all U.S. military personnel, who have died while *serving in the U.S. armed forces*.
1. FYI, our City of Murrieta is hosting the *annual Memorial Day Observance Ceremony* on Monday, 8am, at *Town Square Park*.
 2. **We live in a great Nation.** And I believe our Nation becomes even a better Nation, in every sector, when *Christians begin to live out their Christianity*. **Why?** because it **impacts culture, which makes it better & a safer place.**
 - a) **But** this only happens when we *have a changed heart, no!* (I used to think that) It's when we actually *learn to live out our faith*. **More than** living out our *political party of choice*, **More than** living out *our opinions* on everyone. **Let's not** lose *our voice, our influence, our way, and our opportunity* to be *the conscience of the nation*. As Paul called Timothy to *raise up good soldiers* may we *live out our faith* with the same *sense of duty*, as the *soldiers* we **commemorate today**, who gave the ultimate price, **their lives**. The last sentence we'll read this morning is by Jesus, *hear the word of God and do it*.¹
- F. **Prayer:** (pay tribute to our fallen heroes)

¹ adapted from a statement by Andy Stanley.

II. Slide9 Intro: Be Careful How You Hear

A. I have a *heart condition!* ... *and so do you.*

B. Often you may come on Sundays and *evaluate my sermon.* Not today! Oh no, **it is going to evaluate you!** This morning, everyone of us in this room, **or** listening online, **or** outside, **have one** of these **4 heart conditions** that Jesus describes.

1. How's the your condition of your heart?

2. Some call this text, *The Parable of the Sower.* Some, *The Parable of the Seed.* **But** its actually, *The Parable of the Soils* (4 diff soils / 4 diff results).

C. Matthew adds (ch.13) *On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea.*

1. So they place **Jesus** in a small boat, & push him out a little ways.

"The Galilean shoreline became His parish, and the boat His pulpit."

D. A parable is a teaching device in which *a principle is concealed & a truth revealed.*

1. It gives the hearer 1st **sight**, **then insight.**

2. **It is a mirror & a window:** A mirror that forces us to *look at ourselves.*

A window in which we *see God & His truth.*

E. Slide10,11 **Read** vss.4-15.

F. The *Not seeing & Not understanding* quoted from Isaiah is speaking to not understanding *the deeper truths* (because of their hard hearts).

1. **The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.** 1 Cor. 2:14

G. A parable then is **not to hide all but to reveal some.**

1. It was intended to *arrest & lure* by picture method, by story method.

2. G.Campbell Morgan, *He was hiding the mystery of the kingdom from these men, not the fact of the kingdom.*

3. By telling them a story **He** seeks to *hasten their steps toward the heart of God*

III. Slide12a TRUTH IS FOR HEARING (4-15) *Then, Light* is for Seeing. *Spiritual Family* is Enduring.

- A. **Sowing seeds in bible times:** in many countries today **the soil** is prepared *before* the **planting** takes place, **here**, the **seed** would 1st be scattered widely, **then** plowed in.
1. So, this is **not wastefulness or inefficiency** on behalf of **the sower**, **but** it is *an illustration of the grace of God*.
- B. **The farmer carried a large bag of seed on his donkey. Then he would fill his leather bag that he would carry under his arm** (eg. *Johnny Appleseed*, John Chapman).
1. The seed was broadcasted liberally, then it was covered by the plowing.
 2. **A footpath** often times cut across his field which the public would use. As the farmer would scatter seed some would always land on this.
 - a) **The birds** would be quick to score a free meal. Often times large flocks would often follow the farmer.
 3. **Rocks** were under the soil & couldn't be seen, thus no deepness of earth.
 4. **Many thorn bushes** were present. The native farmer would use these in the summer for *outdoor fires* for cooking meals.
- C. **God's message or seed is for all ... but not everyone will receive it.**
1. Crowds were at **epic proportions** & *superficial followers* multiplied.
 2. **Remember** It's **not the sower** or **the seed** that is **the problem**, **but the soil**
- D. **Slide12b DEFINITIONS:**
1. **The Sower** (5) Jesus 1st, Apostles, 2nd, **us** 3rd.
 2. **The Seed** (11) is the Word, as Jesus clearly defines.
 3. **The Soil and its condition** (12-15) is *the human heart*.
 - a) Since Jesus' emphasis was on **the soil**, *rather than on the sower, or the seed ...* that's where we'll place our emphasis. *Let's look at the 4 hearts:*
- E. **Slide13 [1] THE PATH. THE HARD HEART** [the indifferent heart]
1. The Painting I choose is from **Vincent van Gogh's** famous *The Sower*.
 - a) **He was only a painter 10 yrs.** He was actually *a man of great religious faith* and dreamed of becoming a **Christian minister and missionary**. He tried it for

a time but it was short lived. He was commended for “*his devotion to the sick and injured and his spirit of self sacrifice, to the point of giving his clothes to those convalescing, but they noted certain shortcomings in public speaking.*”

2. Slide14a This seed was **exposed instead of buried** within the heart.
3. Then the Devil comes & takes away – I have normally blamed Satan for this. But I loved Spurgeon’s perspective ... It’s **easy** for birds to pick up seed which lies exposed on a trodden path. (1st Angry birds)
 - a) See if **the soil** had been good & the seed had entered it, satan would have had *far greater difficulty*. [but *a hard heart* does the devil’s work for him]
 - b) Although the seed lay there on the surface & had never penetrated the soul, & although that grain had been trampled, *Satan was not satisfied*.
 - c) Satan thinks, *there may be life in that seed, & if there is, it is dangerous to have it lying there, for it may grow*. So he takes it away altogether.
4. The thief hear is **Punctual** (*immediately* Mk.4:15), **Powerful** (*takes away*), **Practical** (*so that they may not believe & be saved*).
5. **Hard hearts can be plowed up.**
 - a) Slide14b Hosea 10:12 *nlt Plow up the hard ground of your hearts, for now is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and shower righteousness upon you.* (13) But you have cultivated wickedness and harvested a thriving crop of sins.
 - (1) Maybe the Lord had to plow up some things in your life to get your attention right before you got saved?
- F. *Let me **PRAY** for our hard hearts: For our friends/family who have hard hearts. For our own hearts when we go through calloused times.

G. Slide15a [2] **THE ROCKS. THE SHALLOW HEART** [the superficial heart]

1. **Fat heads & short bodies**. The results of *my carrots* in my garden cuz I didn’t dig deep in my rocky soil.
2. **An emotional hearer**, easily swayed by *a tender appeal, a good sermon, or a sweet melody*.

a) They joyfully accept God's Word, **but** do not really understand the cost of following Jesus.

b) They're like Flying Fish that leaps out of the water w/great energy, **but** it would be foolish to think that *he has left the water for good*.

(1) In a moment the fish is swimming again as if it had never left the stream. **The water is still his home.** [hit 43 mph. longest record 45 sec's]

c) **Slide15b** They've only been **brushed** by Christianity. *It's the person who was touched by a sermon on Sunday, but forgot it by Monday.*

3. You may see great enthusiasm for days, weeks, months; **but** when the sun of *persecution or difficulty* comes out, enthusiasm wanes, & joy disappears.

a) This is where so many of the **enemies of the faith** come from.

b) Man is pretty good at *counterfeiting religious feelings*.

H. ***Let me PRAY** for our shallow hearts: For our friends/family who have hard hearts. For our own hearts when we go through calloused times.

I. **Slide16 [3] THE THORNS. THE CROWDED HEART** [the preoccupied/distracted heart]

1. **Three is a crowd: Cares, Riches, Pleasures.**

a) **Cares** - poverty, and the **anxiety/worries** it creates.

b) **Riches** – wealth, with the **dissatisfaction** it creates.

c) **Pleasures** – the pleasures of life. *Pleasures are not necessarily bad, but we can become preoccupied or distracted by them.*

2. **A gardener must not only love flowers & fruit, But hate weeds.**

a) This **choking** is *a slow process* (a weed doesn't grow up in 1 night & choke a flower)

b) The person lacks of weed killer. [they need a good dose of Round Up]

(1) He or she receives the Word, **but** does not truly repent & remove the weeds out of his or her heart.

3. **Their fruit does not mature**/never ripens - **Fruitless Christians** is an oxymoron

4. Note the 3 fruitless hearts each were influenced by a different enemy:

- a) **Hard Heart** – the devil himself snatches the seed. **Shallow Heart** – The flesh counterfeits religious feelings. **Crowded Heart** – the things of this world smothers growth & prevents a harvest.

J. *Let me **PRAY** for our crowded hearts: For our friends/family who have hard hearts. For our own hearts when we go through calloused times.

K. Slide17 [4] **THE GOOD SOIL. THE FRUITFUL HEART** [the honest & good heart]

1. These are true believers who have their heart *cleared, plowed, softened, watered*. They have *a changed-heart, changed-life*. They bear fruit (evidence of the true believer). [the other 3 hearts produced *no fruit*]

2. None of these soils are *hopeless*.

- a) The Hard heart/path can be broken up. The Shallow heart/rock can be shattered. The Crowded heart/thorns can be uprooted.

3. How are you responding to God's Word this morning? How is the soil of your heart today? Can His word penetrate it? What can you do to become the kind of soil Jesus is looking for?

L. *Let me **PRAY** for our fruitful hearts: For our friends/family who have hard hearts. For our own hearts when we go through calloused times.

M. We need to be good **Hearers** of God's word. But we also need to be good **Sowers**.

1. We need to sow the gospel seed far and wide. In every nook and cranny of the world. And we do this knowing that **some** will land on the right kind of heart and will bear fruit. But we also know that sometimes it **won't**, those hearts aren't ready. [cast it liberally]

N. We also see it as Jesus' ministry progressed.

1. **Indifferent Heart** - *the Pharisees and religious leaders* refused to believe.
 2. **Shallow Heart** - *some people* rallied around Jesus **because of His miracles of healing and feeding** but refused to stay with His message.

3. **Crowded Heart** - the *rich young ruler* was interested in Jesus **but** would not accept Him because of *the strong pull of materialism*.
4. **Fruitful Heart** - *others* followed Him **and** were committed to His Word regardless of the cost.

IV. Slide18 **LIGHT IS FOR SEEING (16-18)** *1st, Truth is for Hearing. next, Spiritual Family is Enduring.*

- A. This parable is to *reinforce* the message of the parable of the Soils.
 1. **As** the **truth** was for **hearing**, *now here* the **lamp** is for **seeing**.
- B. Those who have **heard** the word with **faith & commitment** *have the light*. **And the light** is for *sharing*, that others may **see**. [God intends *your light* to be **seen**, not *hidden*]
 1. A person is not given the secrets of *the kingdom of God* in order to **keep them secret**.
 2. **Take your light and let it shine**. *This little light of mine I'm gonna let it shine* ... is actually a very bold manifesto/public declaration.
- C. How about we go out into all the world and *let our light shine* by, **not** complaining all the time, **not** arguing all the time, **not** being a *know-it-all*, all the time.
 1. *Sharing your faith, is simply making known the things you've learned about Jesus*.

V. Slide19 **SPIRITUAL FAMILY IS ENDURING (19-21)** *Truth is for Hearing. Light is for Seeing.*

- A. **The logical outcome of** (4-15) is that a person who **hears/understands**, **and** actually *reflects them in their life* (16-18), was *rightly related to Him* (19-21).
- B. Those of Jesus' larger family are those who both **hear** His word & put it into **practice**. [response brings *relationship*]
- C. He meant there is a **deeper kinship** than flesh & blood, a *spiritual family* which is characterized by **obedience to the Father**.
- D. Jesus describes *the New family*, which is far superior to *the human family*... for it lasts longer (eternal), it's stronger, it's more satisfying.

1. You've witnessed this. You meet someone, you find out they are born-again. You talk about Christ, ministry, His love. And you sense that warm wonderful feeling of **family**.
2. *Do you have more in common with your **spiritual family**, then w/your **earthly family**?*

E. Keywords: Heart, light.

F. **End:** *In simple humility, let our gardener, God, landscape you with the Word, making a salvation-garden of your life.* James 1:21 Msg