



First Baptist Church Selmer

THE "HEART" OF THE MATTER • THE "STONY HEART" •
MATTHEW 13:5, 20-21; LUKE 8:6, 13; 1 PETER 1:6-7 • 11/13/2022

MAIN POINT

The person whose heart has never grown in depth in their relationship with Jesus will slowly wither away as life brings difficulties their way.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How many of you are overly concerned with expiration dates on the food you eat?

How many of you think it is only a suggestion, not an absolute truth?

Contrary to the beliefs of many, most food product expiration or "best by" dates are not scientifically-based.

"The humble sell-by date actually has a surprisingly short history. It was introduced in Marks & Spencer's storerooms in the 1950s before making its way onto the shelves in 1970. It wasn't even actually called a "sell-by-date" until 1973." - Mic Wright *The Guardian*

Only one food in the U.S. is federally mandated to contain an expiration date? Can you name it?

If you said milk, you're wrong. Eggs? Wrong again! Meats, definitely meats. 0 for 3.

The only federally mandated product Americans consume that requires an expiration date is... baby formula. Some states require other products to be labeled but only formula is federally regulated.

According to the *USDA* website, "USDA estimates that 30 percent of the food supply is lost or wasted at the retail and consumer levels. One source of food waste arises from consumers or

retailers throwing away wholesome food because of confusion about the meaning of dates displayed on the label... With an exception of infant formula, if the date passes during home storage, a product should still be safe and wholesome if handled properly until the time spoilage is evident. Spoiled foods will develop an off odor, flavor, or texture due to naturally occurring spoilage bacteria. If a food has developed such spoilage characteristics, it should not be eaten."

Our lesson today will look at faith. Not a faith based on emotion, or a feeling, or even one that contains an expiration date or shelf-life. Faith that is not growing and maturing you, is not faith at all. Faith leads to a depth in your relationship with Christ, not something you did years ago, but something you're living out daily, yearly, and for all eternity.

UNDERSTANDING

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 13:5 & LUKE 8:6

Matthew 13:5 "Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil" (ESV)

Luke 8:6 "And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture." (ESV)

Have you ever tried to plant seeds in rocky soil?

What makes planting in rocky soil so difficult?

The second soil described in the parable is stony, or rocky soil. The idea here was not soil that contained multiple loose stones but a layer of bedrock that contained a thin layer of soil on top. The soil was favorable enough for the germination of the seeds but unable to sustain growth for a long period. The soil would warm quickly causing the seeds to sprout, but the shallowness of the soil would lead to the scorching of the plant due to its inability to grow deeper roots.

The ultimate problem was not their sudden growth, but their lack of depth. The same sun that will warm and mature that which is rooted, is the same sun that will wither and burn up that which contains shallow roots.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 13:20-21 & LUKE 8:13

Matthew 13:20 "As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who heard the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away." (ESV)

Luke 8:13 "And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away." (ESV)

What do you believe Jesus is referring to in verse 20, "immediately receives it with joy"?

What type of difficulties has caused you to doubt or struggle with your faith?

Does this example seem to state that someone could lose their salvation?

The stony heart is one that receives the Word of God initially, perhaps unreserved or even an emotional response, yet only under favorable circumstances. When things are well and looking their way, it seems as if they are truly saved, yet when difficulties come, so goes their faith.

New Testament scholar, Richard France, once stated, "Tribulation is a general term for suffering which comes from outside; persecution is deliberately inflicted, and usually implies a religious motive. Falls away (stumbles) is literally 'tripped up'; it is not a gradual loss of interest, but a collapse under pressure."

The Bible is clear that hearing the Word of God, and even receiving it, will not save a soul. James 1:22 states, "*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*" If we believe that hearing and receiving alone will save us, then we are only deceiving ourselves.

There is great debate even among Christians on the idea of "Once Saved, Always Saved." This theological debate is also known as "The Perseverance of the Saints." Although debated by scholars for centuries and even in churches today, the stony soil describes a person that heard and even received the Word of God as true, but it was never truly sincere. When their faith was tested, it proved to not be faith at all.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 PETER 1:6-7

6 *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith - more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire - may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* (ESV)

Why does Paul state we face trials in life?

Would you rather live your life with a tested and true faith or one that is untested only to find out later that it was not real?

How can a tested and proved faith bring praise, glory, and honor to Jesus?

It has been said that "*a faith that can't be tested is a faith that can't be trusted.*" Obviously, if any of us had to choose, we would never choose to face trials and difficulties in our lives. However, in light of eternity, trials are what God uses to test our faith. If our faith is true now, it will not only last for a lifetime, but for eternity.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In what active ways can we be sure that the word of God is deeply rooted in our lives?

Why is it not enough to just hear the word of God? What does putting it into practice reveal about our commitment to Him?

Is there something you have been hearing from God but not doing?

PRAYER

As a closing prayer activity, spend time listening to the prayer requests of the people in your group. Encourage each group member to share. In addition to basic needs, ask your group members to voice specific prayer requests concerning areas of their lives where they are struggling to apply God's Word.

COMMENTARY

| LUKE 8:4-8

Initially, the sower is Jesus Christ, but the sower represents any of God's people who share the Word of God (John 4:35-38). The seed is the Word of God, for, like the seed, the Word has life and power (Heb. 4:12) and can produce spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22-23). But the seed can do nothing until it is planted (John 12:24). When a person hears and understands the Word, then the seed is planted in the heart. What happens after that depends on the nature of the soil.

The seed without the soil is fruitless, and the soil without the seed is almost useless. The human heart is like soil: if it is prepared properly, it can receive the seed of the Word of God and produce a fruitful harvest.

Jesus described four different kinds of hearts, three of which did not produce any fruit. The proof of salvation is *fruit* and not merely hearing the Word or making a profession of faith in Christ. Jesus had already made that clear in His "Sermon on the Mount."

The shallow soil (v.6, 13) This soil illustrates the emotional hearer who quickly responds to the message, but his interest wanes and he does not continue (see John 8:31-32). In many parts of the Holy Land you find a substratum of limestone covered with a thin layer of soil. The shoot can grow up, but the roots cannot go down, and the sun withers the rootless plant. The sun represents the testing that comes to all professing believers to prove their faith. Sun is good for plants *if they have roots*. Persecution can deepen the roots of a true Christian, but it only exposes the shallowness of the false Christian.

| 1 PETER 1:6-7

We must keep in mind that all God plans and performs here is preparation for what He has in store for us in heaven. He is preparing us for the life and service yet to come. Nobody yet knows all that is in store for us in heaven, but this we do know: life today is a school in which God trains us for our future ministry in eternity. This explains the presence of trials in our lives: they are some of God's tools and textbooks in the school of Christian experience.

Peter used the words *trials* rather than *tribulations* or *persecutions*, because he was dealing with the general problems that Christians face as they are surrounded by unbelievers.

Trials are varied We must not think that because we have overcome one kind of trial that we will automatically "win them all." Trials are varied, and God matches the trial to our strengths and needs.

Trials are not easy To deny that our trials are painful is to make them even worse. Christians must accept the fact that there are difficult experiences in life and not put on a brave front just to

appear "more spiritual."

Trials are controlled by God They do not last forever; they are "for a season." The important thing is that we learn the lesson He wants to teach us and that we bring glory to Him alone.

(The Wiersbe Bible Commentary by Warren W. Wiersbe)