

SOIL CARE

FOR ALL SEASONS

Soil Care: Week 2

Last week Pastor John walked us through the parable of the four soils. In this parable, Jesus mentions how the enemy comes and takes away the first seed. His tactic, purpose, and desire is to kill, steal and destroy the work of God in you, which is the very seed that God has strategically and purposely planted in the soil of your heart! The enemy, infact, is involved in the first three of the soils. He's causing us to feel discouraged because of persecution or difficulty, or causing us to be distracted by worries of this world, deceitfulness of wealth, or the cares of this world. The good news for us today though is that Jesus is also involved! He's the ultimate soil care person and if God knows these different enemy tactics are going to happen, He wants us to thrive and He wants us to make it. God is interested in us realizing where the hardness of our heart shows up and where there are thorns that are going to choke out the Word. While Satan is working, Jesus is too, and He's going to use that by things going sideways, through the pandemic, or through any difficulties because those things are going to cause things in us to surface. We can get really frustrated and blameshift and think it's about somebody else, but if we are able to go with Jesus on it, He will point out that it's a hardness in our heart or a thorn, and then we will come to realize He's right and He wants to work through it with us! This series is about giving us a grid on how we interpret difficulties and challenges so that we don't just respond to the enemy, but we can really go with Jesus into discerning the soil of our hearts and where it is that God is and what it is that He's doing.

Pastor John has also written some Lectio Divina and Ignatian Meditations in light of this series. We encourage you to check them out as you're tending to your heart with Jesus! They can be found here - <https://epicentre.org/meditations>

LOOKING BACK:

FAMILY TIME (25 min)

- Vision Statement: Explain the vision of your lifegroup. Invite someone in your lifegroup to share your vision piece next time.
- Intro Question: What are you most looking forward to in 2021?

- Prayer Requests, Praise Reports and Updates from previous week(s) - Perhaps the challenges shared by group members from the intro question will lead nicely into this time of prayer together.

LOOKING UP:

WORSHIP (20 min)

- Spend time in worship together.

Start at **23:10 - 37:10**: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLH8vP_zbrs

BIBLE STUDY (20 min)

Mark 4:1-20 (The Voice)

4 1-2 Jesus went out again to teach by the Sea of Galilee. When the crowd became unmanageable, He climbed aboard a boat and sat down to teach the people listening on the shore by telling them parables. One of His teachings went like this:

Jesus: 3 Listen! A farmer went out and sowed his seed. 4 As he scattered it, one seed fell along the *hardened* path, and a bird flapped down and snapped it up. 5 One seed fell onto rocky places where the soil was thin, so it sprang up quickly. 6 But when the hot sun scorched *the fragile stems and leaves*, the seedling withered because its roots didn't go deep in the soil. 7 One of the seeds fell among the *weeds and thorns*, which crowded the seedling out of producing a crop. 8 And the rest of the seeds fell in good, rich soil. When they sprouted, the plants grew and produced a crop 30, 60, even 100 times larger *than expected* for every seed that the farmer had sown.

9 All who have ears to hear, let them listen.

10 When they were alone, the twelve and others close to Him asked why He always taught in parables *instead of explaining His teachings clearly*.

Jesus: 11 God has let you in on the inside story regarding the workings of the Kingdom—the hidden meanings. But the crowds—I teach them in parables 12 as *the prophet Isaiah predicted*,

So that when they look, they see and yet do not understand.

When they hear, they listen and yet do not comprehend.

Otherwise, they might really turn and be forgiven.

13 Do you mean to say that you didn't understand My parable of the sower? *That was the key parable. If you don't see what I was trying to teach there*, how will you be able to understand any of the others?

14 The seed the farmer is sowing is *the good news*, God's word. 15 Some people are the seed thrown onto the path, and the tempter snaps up the word *before it can even take root*. 16 Others are the seed thrown among the rocks. Those people hear the word and receive it immediately with joy and enthusiasm; 17 but without deep roots, *doubt*, trouble, or persecution instantly withers their faith. 18 Still others are the seed tossed among *weeds and* brambles. The word has reached them, 19 but the things of this life—the worries, the drive for more and more, the desire for other things—those things *cluster around close and* choke the life of God out of them until they cannot produce. 20 But those last seeds—those sown into good soil? Those people hear the word, accept it, *meditate on it, act on it*, and bear fruit—a crop 30, 60, or 100 times larger *than the farmer dropped to earth*.

Guided questions for your group to explore together:

- 1) What really strikes you from this passage?
- 2) Is there a specific soil that resonates with your heart in this season?
- 3) What is God wanting to do in you to bring forth good soil on which His Word can fall?

LOOKING FORWARD (20-30 minutes)

Allow this be a space for God to minister to the hearts of your people in this time. Maybe play some soak/instrumental music while everyone takes some time to engage the Lord's heart (here's a good soak track you can use - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xx1MjhzKcYw&t=1169s>). Here are some more guided thoughts and questions for this time of seeking to engage God's heart. Encourage your group members to read through them, and answer which ones feel very real to them this week:

- a) Lord, will you reveal to me the hardness of my heart? I desire for my heart to become good soil in which Your Word can be nourished.
- b) Lord, will you reveal to me the thorns of my heart? I desire for my heart to become good soil in which Your Word can be nourished.
- c) Lord, I am feeling very challenged by _____. I am feeling very frustrated by _____. Take a minute to really go there with Jesus into discerning the soil of your heart. Allow Him space to reveal where it is that God is and what it is that He's wanting to do in you.

** If you have some additional time, spend it praying for one another and sharing God's heart with each other as led by Holy Spirit.

KIDS' LESSON:

Supplies: coloring supplies, paper, pencil/pen

Sometimes it's helpful to retell the story in different ways, or in your own words. This week, we will be using our God-given artistic abilities to reflect on the parable of the seeds!

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Instructions:

1. Listen to the story once before you start drawing.
2. Think about the seeds that Jesus describes. What do they represent?
3. Draw each soil besides the last one - be creative! What are different ways people struggle in those soils? How have you struggled in these soils?
4. Ask God, how can I be like the good soil? Is there anything that makes it difficult for me to be good soil? Take some time to ask God to guide you.
5. Draw yourself as the good soil, praying and declaring in faith that God will guide you to become like this! What does it look like for you to live in good soil?