



The Four Soils

FAMILIES IN TRUTH

Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23

**WOW!**

How can the same message be heard FOUR different ways? God's Word does not change. And God's power to work through His Word does not change. So how can four different people hear the same message, and all four have a different result? Actually, it is up to each person. It is our response to the message that determines how much impact it will have on our life. God allows **you** to decide what you want to do with his message and how you want it to change your life. This explains why the same message has such a different impact on different people, or even on the same person at different times. How much can His message transform your life? Exactly as much as you let it!

The parable of the sower in Matthew 13 warns us of three wrong responses to the Word, and explains what the right response looks like. The "seed" Jesus talks about is the Word of God. This week, look at the four responses Jesus tells about and examine your **own** response. Pray each day to talk to God about what you are learning.

Day #1: Hard Path

Go outside and find a worn down spot in the dirt. Maybe it is a path you walk on every day. Bend down and feel it with your hand. If seed fell on this spot, would it sink down into the dirt and find a soft, moist place to grow? No, it would lay on top of the path and dry out in the sun. It would soon become bird food!



The seeds that fell along the road are the people who hear the message about the kingdom, but don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches the message from their hearts. - Matthew 13:19 (CEV)

The ones **along the path** are those who fail to understand how God's word applies to them. These people don't take it to heart. They have decided not to even consider applying God's truth to their lives. They may act angry toward God's message or just shrug their shoulders because they don't care. Because of this, God's enemy, Satan, blinds their eyes to the truth, or puts mental stumbling blocks in their way. He will supply people with reasons to reject the message (like "Only geeks believe that stuff" or "Jesus wants to ruin your fun.") Satan wants to distract people from thinking about God's Word.



What about you? Does this describe how you feel about God's Word? If so, you can change your response today. Pray and ask God to make you willing to hear His truth with eager ears. When you hear or read the Bible, you can talk about it with someone who believes it and can help you apply it to your life.

Day #2: Rocky Places

Look around the outside of your house for rocky places. Maybe you will find a crack in your driveway or sidewalk. Has a little plant ever made its way into one of those cracks? Do you think it has all the room it needs to grow properly? Will it get the sun and nutrients it needs to get big and be healthy? No, it will soon wither because the roots cannot grow like they should.



Others received the seed that fell on rocky places. They are those who hear the message and at once receive it with joy. But they have no roots. So they last only a short time. They quickly fall away from the faith when trouble or suffering comes because of the message.- Matthew 13:20-21

Those **on the rock** hear the message with joy, but the joy doesn't last. These people may like what they hear at first, but they do not study God's Word deeply. Some people only want to be entertained; they like the parts of Christianity that seem fun, but do not want to work hard or suffer in any way. Remember, lots of people came to hear Jesus teach and see him do miracles. But there were not many people willing to stand by Him when He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane or hung on the cross.



Does this describe the way you feel about God's Word? Did you hear it with excitement at first, but that excitement soon faded? If so, you can pray for God to break all the rocky parts of your heart. You can dig into God's Word more fully. The more you learn, the deeper your roots will grow. Then you will stand firm even when trials come your way.

Day #3: Thorny Ground

Can you find a spot in your yard where weeds love to grow? Sometimes they grow right in the middle of another plant or bush. It can even be hard to tell a weed from a plant at times. Weeds steal nutrients from the plants around them. And some weeds have awful thorns that seem to be just waiting to hurt you. Weeds and thorns can create a tangled mess for a gardener.

+ *Others received the seed that fell among the thorns. They are those who hear the message. But then the worries of this life and the false promises of wealth crowd it out. They keep it from producing fruit. - Matthew 13:22*

Those **among the thorns** are those who let other things come before their time with God. It may be something they are really worried about, or it may be something they like to do so much that they spend all their spare time doing it or thinking about it. Whatever it is, it is stealing their time and energy away from talking to God and studying His Word. This can even happen to true believers and it keeps them from learning, from growing, and from spreading God's love.

***** What about you? Is there something in your life that seems more important to you than your time with God? Think long and hard because this is an important question. If there is something that comes before God in your life, ask God to help you put Him first. If you have worries that crowd your mind, tell those to God too. The Bible says, *"Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about what happens to you."* - 1Peter 5:7

Day #4: Good Soil

Look out the window next time you are riding in the car. Try to spot a vegetable garden. What does it take for those plants to grow up so big and full, brimming with healthy things to eat? It takes good soil - soil that has been taken care of by the gardener. It is soft, rich with nutrients, and cleared of rocks and weeds.

+ *But still others received the seed that fell on good soil. They are those who hear the message and understand it. They produce a crop 100, 60 or 30 times more than the farmer planted. - Matthew 13:23*

The **good ground** stands for the people who hear God's message and not only understand what the words mean, but they allow it to change their lives. These people spend time hearing and studying God's Word so that they will know God better. They avoid things that can make their heart hard and dry, unable

Day #4 continued:

to accept God's message because they want to bear fruit for God's kingdom. Romans 12:2 says:

"Don't live any longer the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed. Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. And you will agree that what he wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect."

***** What do we do to make sure we are "good soil"? We read God's Word, and talk about what we read with someone who loves the Lord. We spend time talking and listening to God. And we ask God for wisdom to apply what we learn to our life everyday. Did you know it is even okay to ask God to make us *want* to study His Word? If you ask - He will do it! Only He can draw us to Himself (John 6:44).

Day #5: The Fruit

Think about your favorite fruit. Maybe it is delicious pineapple or juicy watermelon. Doesn't it make your mouth water just thinking about it? If you have one at home, go and get an apple. Look at it and think about how good it is to bite down into that crisp, sweet fruit.

+ *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. - Galatians 5:22-23a*

What is this **fruit** we keep talking about? Galatians gives us a wonderful list of God's characteristics. Look at the list that the Bible calls "fruit". Wow, it would be hard to accomplish all those things on our own. But remember, those are the fruit of the **Spirit**. Whose spirit? Not *your* spirit, but God's Holy Spirit. When we put our trust in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us (2 Corinthians 1:22). It is only through the Holy Spirit that we can grow this fruit in our life. Another type of spiritual fruit is when we share God's truth with other people. But remember, we can't produce any fruit by ourselves. Jesus said, *"I am the Vine. You are the branches. If anyone remains joined to Me, and I to him, he will bear a lot of fruit. You can't do anything without Me."* - John 15:5

***** Now look at your apple. Ask your Mom or Dad to cut it open, right down the middle. What do you see? More seeds! When you protect yourself from things that make your heart hard, give your worries to God, and listen closely to God's Word, not only will you have much fruit in your life, but you will have **more seed** to share with other people. And that will produce even **more fruit**. God's plan is truly amazing!

