

09

THE SON HAS TRUTH

LEADER GUIDE


the **GOSPEL**PROJECT.

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ADULTS



FALL | 2026

GOD'S WORD FOR YOU

A SUMMARY OF THE BIBLE

In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in His image to live joyfully in His presence, in humble submission to His gracious authority. But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God.

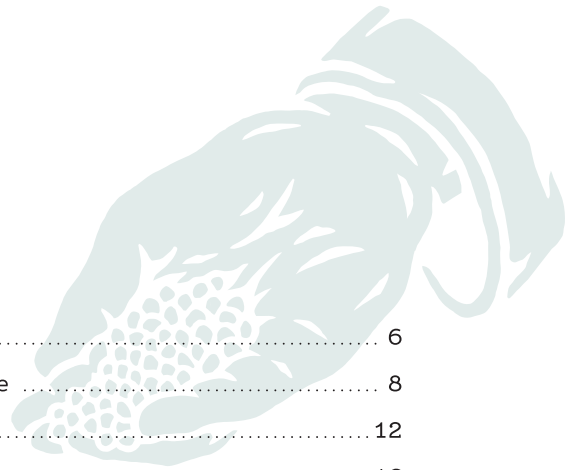
Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with His choosing the nation of Israel to display His glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel's behalf, rescuing His people from slavery and then giving them His holy law. But God's people—like all of us—failed to rightly reflect the glory of God.

Then, in the fullness of time, in the person of Jesus Christ, God Himself came to renew the world and to restore His people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, He suffered the consequences of human rebellion by His death on a cross. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead.

Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ's work to the world. Empowered by God's Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. By God's grace in Christ, repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation.

The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God's judgment and live joyfully in God's presence for all eternity. God's message is the same to all of us: repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved.

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THE EDITOR

For some of us, the events of Jesus's life seem like stories in a children's book that we have gotten used to over the years. Yet if we truly shape our minds to visualize the complications, the confrontations, and the controversies surrounding all He did, we would be reminded of the truth and the power to which He spoke and lived.

Jesus spoke with precision in His parables. He wanted the crowds, the Pharisees, and His disciples to seek the truth of His words.

He revealed His authority over all—over this earthly domain, over disabilities, over diseases, over demons, over death. They all submit under His command and control.

He brought physical and spiritual healing with compassion and care like only God could and would. The way He lived is an example for us to follow.

Jesus's life of ministry was a picture of love and sacrifice even before His crucifixion. He endured temptation, opposition, hunger, fatigue, and grief as a human because of His desire to rescue us from sin.

As Paul stated in Philippians, Jesus “who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity” (Philippians 2:6-7).

In His humanity and deity, He is our King. He proved His authority and godhood through miracles only He could do. And as we shall see, He gave up His life for us and overcame the power of death for our salvation. That is the Jesus we worship and trust in truth.

Y Bonesteele

Team Leader

The Gospel Project for Adults



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The Gospel Project®

Adult Leader Guide

Fall 2026

Volume 3, Number 1

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TEACHING TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

By G. Dwayne McCrary



God gifted each of us differently. Paul pointed out that God gifts “some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). Some take this to mean we need to stay in our lane, let the evangelist do his work while we do our work as a shepherd or teacher. However, this same Paul directed his protégé Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5). Paul’s direction to Timothy would be consistent with the Great Commission in Matthew 28, where Jesus directed all of His disciples to make disciples, which includes evangelizing. Those gifted as teachers may do evangelism differently than those gifted with service or hospitality, but we are all tasked with evangelism in some way.

Here are five things we can do to be more intentional about sharing the gospel when we lead a Bible study group.

1) BE PREPARED TO SHARE

We all need to be able to share how we became followers of Jesus and how others can do the same. If we need help, we can always refer to the information on the inside front cover of the Lifeway resources that explains how to respond to the gospel. We may have a favorite verse (John 3:16; 14:6; Rom. 6:23) or set of verses (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10; Eph. 2:1-13) we can point to when sharing the gospel. The key isn’t so much which verse or verses we use but that we’re prepared to share when the opportunity arises.

2) INVITE PEOPLE TO SHARE THEIR STORIES

The people in our groups have stories to tell if we give them an opportunity. Some won’t share their story unless we invite them to share how they came to Jesus. This also helps those in our groups improve as witnesses for Christ and get more comfortable with sharing the gospel as they listen to others and share their own stories with the group.

3) LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES

In Lifeway resources, at least one lesson each quarter is marked as evangelistic, but that doesn’t mean the others do not offer occasions to share the gospel. Most, if not every, Bible study session provides an opportunity to share the gospel. A lesson on the use of money can open a door by reminding the group that we use our money not to secure our salvation but in response to the salvation Jesus already secured for us. Subtle, yet still an opportunity to share the gospel. Many times we pass over those openings without thinking about it.

4) INCLUDE A WAY TO RESPOND

Telling a person about Jesus and His offer of salvation is only half the work. We need to offer them a way to respond. Asking them in front of the group may not be the best approach. We are asking them to make a big decision that requires careful thought. We can make ourselves available after group time or share our phone numbers in case anyone wants to talk more about what it means to follow Jesus. However we do it, we need to make sure no one is left wanting to know more or wanting to respond without an opportunity to do so.



5) ENCOURAGE THE GROUP TO PRAY FOR, INVITE, AND BRING ALONG PEOPLE WHO ARE FAR FROM GOD

One reason we may not always feel an urgency to share the gospel as we teach is that we are leading the same group of people week in and week out. In effect, our groups become functionally closed. By encouraging participants to pray for opportunities to share the gospel, invite people not currently involved in a Bible study group, and bring the people they invite with them, we might find ourselves more intentional about sharing the gospel when we teach. Notice that “invite” and “bring” are listed separately. We need to remind our groups that we can invite people to attend, but if we invite them and offer to pick them up or meet them in the parking lot, they will be more likely to say yes to the invitation.

Review the lessons for this quarter and note those specifically identified as evangelistic. Encourage your group to make special efforts to bring guests with them on the weeks these lessons are taught.

G. Dwayne McCrary is the manager of Adult Ongoing Bible studies at Lifeway.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

The Gospel Project for Adults aspires to point to the gospel of Jesus Christ through weekly group Bible studies and additional resources that show how God's plan of redemption unfolds throughout all of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. This curriculum provides theological yet practical studies that immerse your group in the STORY of the gospel, helping to develop a gospel CULTURE that leads to gospel MISSION.

GOSPEL STORY

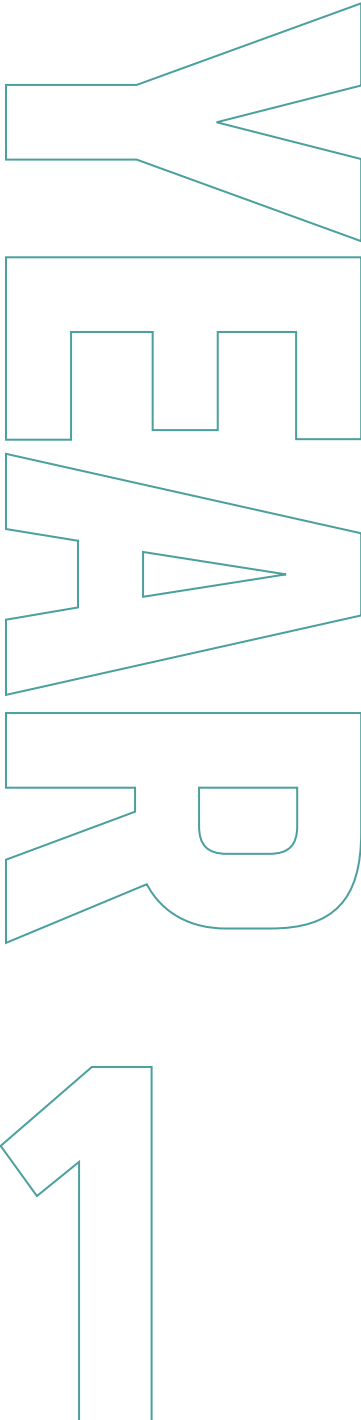
Our aim is to help people see the storyline of Scripture, the thread from the beginning to end, that weaves God's plan to rescue and redeem His creation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL CULTURE

Our hope is that the message of the gospel saturates our understanding of Christ, increasing our joy in Him, helping doubters become believers who become declarers of the gospel.

GOSPEL MISSION

Our desire is to empower believers to live on mission, declaring the good news of the gospel in word and deed for God's glory and the growth of His kingdom.



VOL 01:
CREATION AND COVENANT

(Genesis; Job)

Fall 2024

Unit 01: Foundations

Unit 02: God's Promises

Unit 03: Struggles of Faith

VOL 02:
LAW AND LIFE

(Exodus–Deuteronomy)

Winter 2024–25

Unit 04: God's Miraculous Work

Unit 05: God's Character

Unit 06: Humanity's Selfishness

VOL 03:
LAND AND LOSS

(Joshua–1 Samuel)

Spring 2025

Unit 07: God Is for His People

Unit 08: God Delivers His People

Unit 09: God Cares for His People

VOL 04:
FOOLISHNESS AND WISDOM

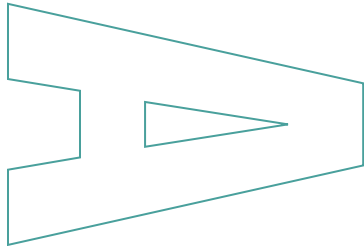
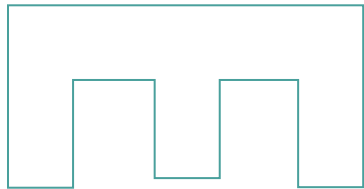
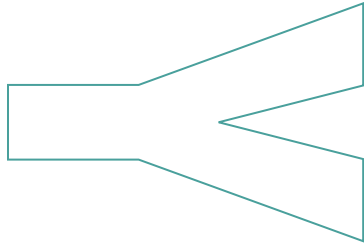
(1 Samuel–1 Kings; Wisdom Literature)

Summer 2025

Unit 10: The Foolishness of God's People

Unit 11: Everything Belongs to the Lord

Unit 12: The Need for Wisdom



VOL 05:
DIVISION AND DEFIANCE

(1 Kings–2 Chronicles; The Prophets)

Fall 2025

Unit 13: Divisions

Unit 14: Renewal

Unit 15: Decline

VOL 06:
PROPHETS AND PROVISION

(The Prophets; Ezra–Esther)

Winter 2025–26

Unit 16: God in the Exile

Unit 17: God in the Restoration

Unit 18: God in the Return

VOL 07:
THE SON HAS COME

(The Gospels)

Spring 2026

Unit 19: The Arrival

Unit 20: The Preparation

Unit 21: The Ministry

VOL 08:
THE SON HAS AUTHORITY

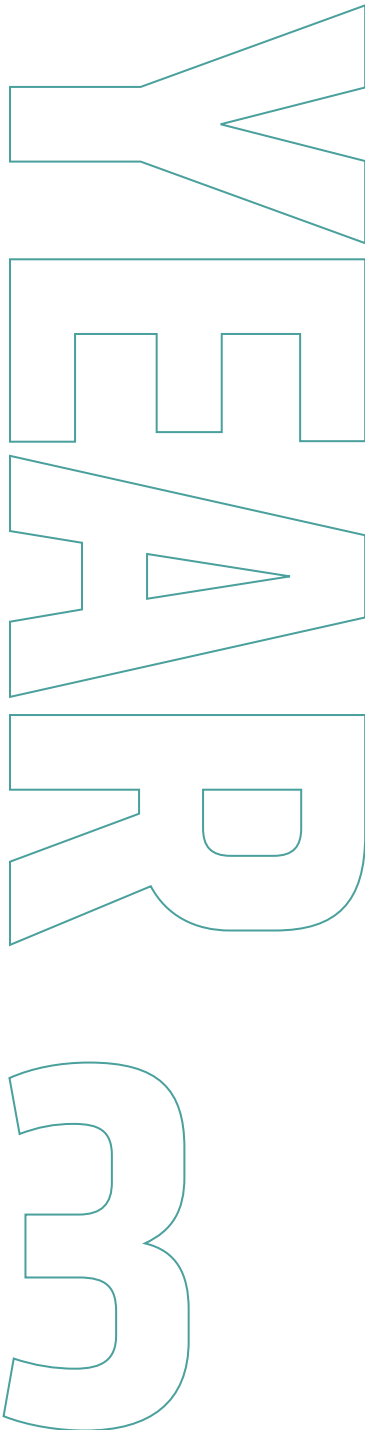
(The Gospels)

Summer 2026

Unit 22: Responses to Jesus

Unit 23: The Way of Jesus

Unit 24: The Teachings of Jesus



VOL 09:
THE SON HAS TRUTH

(The Gospels)

Fall 2026

Unit 25: The Truth of His Power

Unit 26: The Truth of His Actions

Unit 27: The Truth of His Kingdom

VOL 10:
THE SON HAS RISEN

(The Gospels; Acts)

Winter 2026–27

Unit 28: The Final Days

Unit 29: Post-Resurrection

Unit 30: The Gospel Spreads

VOL 11:
THE CHURCH HAS A MISSION

(Acts; The Epistles)

Spring 2027

Unit 31: Sharing Truths of the Mission

Unit 32: Living Out the Mission

Unit 33: Christ Focuses Our Mission

VOL 12:
THE CHURCH HAS A FUTURE

(The Epistles; Revelation)

Summer 2027

Unit 34: We Are in Christ

Unit 35: We Are Citizens of Heaven

Unit 36: Jesus

HOW TO USE THE LEADER GUIDE

The Leader Guide is an important tool in your personal and group experience with The Gospel Project for Adults. Here's how to make the most of your time with it:

1) READ THE WORD DAILY

Begin each week by reading the Scriptures according to the Daily Readings. These Bible readings will help you mentally and spiritually prepare for the group experience each week while also building healthy Bible study habits for personal growth. The daily readings will help you understand the context of the Bible story for each week's session and fill in the gaps between sessions. The weekly psalm reading will help you think worshipfully and prayerfully about the story's place in the greater redemptive narrative of the Bible. And the timeline will give you a visual perspective so you can place the Bible story in the larger context of the Bible's storyline.

- **Daily Readings**
- **Chronological Timeline**



TIMELINE

Jesus Appoints His Twelve Disciples (Luke 6:12-16)

SESSION STUDY: Jesus Teaches and Explains the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-18)

Jesus Heals Two Daughters (Luke 8:40-56)

Jesus Delivers His Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17-49)

Jesus Calms a Storm (Luke 8:22-25)

Daily Readings

☐ Day 1: Luke 8:1-8	☐ Day 4: Mark 4:10-12
☐ Day 2: Luke 8:9-15	☐ Day 5: Mark 4:13-20
☐ Day 3: Mark 4:1-9	☐ Day 6: Psalm 81



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

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2) STUDY FOR PERSONAL PREPARATION

The Personal Preparation section contains the Scripture passages that will guide you and your group to prepare for Bible study during the week before group time begins. A Bible study prompt will help you engage with the Scripture passage, but encourage your group to do more than what's asked in the prompt. Space is provided for you and your group to add notes and questions and markings that will help you study the passage more deeply and see any nuances about the words and phrases of the Scripture provided. In addition to a brief commentary with thought-provoking questions to help you and your group dig deeper into the text, leader notes will provide you with additional nuggets for understanding the Scriptures. Use this Personal Preparation to experience what your group is experiencing as they study the week prior. Consider what questions, thoughts, or challenges they might have while engaging with the Scripture passages.

- Scripture
- Commentary
- Questions

Notes

PERSONAL PREPARATION


SCAN ME

Bonus Content
Scan this QR code to see a comparative view of the parable of the sower in the Synoptic Gospels.

GOD'S WORD NEEDS TO BE HEARD AND INTERNALIZED FOR TRANSFORMATION (LUKE 8:11-15).

Highlight how Jesus defines these parts of the parable: seed, seed along the path, seed on the rock, seed among thorns, and the seed on good ground.

11 "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12 The seed along the path are those who have heard and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13 And the seed on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy. Having no root, these believe for a while and fall away in a time of testing. 14 As for the seed that fell among thorns, these are the ones who, when they have heard, go on their way and are choked with worries, riches, and pleasures of life, and produce no mature fruit. 15 But the seed in the good ground—these are the ones who, having heard the word with an honest and good heart, hold on to it and by enduring, produce fruit."

Jesus explained that the seed in the parable represents God's Word. A sower scatters seed with a purpose—he intends for the seed he scatters to germinate, thrive, and produce fruit. Although Jesus knew that not every gospel seed would be received, He preached with the expectation that some would bear fruit. For others, there would be obstacles.

Seed sown on hardened hearts cannot bring salvation, as Satan quickly snatches the truth away to prevent understanding and belief. The gospel offers abundant life, but the thief seeks to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). Seed sown on shallow hearts, though received joyfully, cannot endure for lack of nourishment ("no root"; Luke 8:13). Without the work of the Holy Spirit to transform the heart, shallow belief falls away during testing. Seed sown on a heart rife with thorns—"worries, riches, and pleasures of life" (v. 14)—is slowly strangled as worldliness and misplaced priorities prevent living faith.

LEADER NOTE: A common concern that arises when studying this parable comes in trying to understand which of the soils represents people who are saved versus those who are not. Darrell Bock stated that this concern misunderstands Jesus's message and "to ask this question of each soil is to misdirect the parable's emphasis. Jesus is not communicating the minimum response required to receive blessing. Rather, he is instructing the disciples on fruitfulness by pointing out obstacles that prevent such a response."

Which of these obstacles to receiving the gospel have you encountered in yourself or a loved one?

Notes

Key Concept: Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Scripture teaches us that Jesus is the way to salvation, and following Him by faith with the Holy Spirit will lead to true transformation.

With such powerful obstacles at war against the gospel, it is a miracle that any seeds of faith survive to bear fruit. Yet that is exactly what happens with the fourth seed—this person receives the Word and holds fast to it, so that it endures and bears plentiful fruit. The difference lies in the soil of the heart. But how is it possible to have "an honest and good heart" (v. 15) suitable to receive God's Word and bear fruit? This requires the work of the Holy Spirit, who exchanges a heart of stone for a heart of flesh, enabling believers to trust God and obey with a heart of love (Ezek. 11:19-20).

LEADER NOTE: What does it look like to "hold on" to God's Word to "produce fruit" (Luke 8:15)? It looks like abiding in Christ. Jesus said: "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and so prove to be my disciples" (John 15:7-8). Believers who bear fruit do so by persevering in their faith in Christ, internalizing His Word, and praying for the Spirit to produce fruit through them. Then, as they walk in the Spirit, they bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:16, 22-23).

How should the expectation that some seeds will bear fruit motivate us to spread gospel truth?

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

"We win the [spiritual] war for the Word when we look to bear fruit with patience (Gal 1:2-4). We're not trying to rush into maturity or skip the things that produce growth. We just steadily read, believe, and apply the Bible, and let patience have its perfect work in our lives."
—Thabiti Anyabwile

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Unit 25 | Session 1 | Power of God's Word

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3) DIRECT THE GROUP EXPERIENCE

The Group Experience for each session includes an activity and interactive questions designed to be used in the group context to engage your group in active learning. The personal prep you and your group put into the days leading up to your group time will provide a richer discussion and more thoughtful theological applications to mutually encourage each other during your group time. The first page of the Group Experience will help you engage your group members as they arrive. Dialogue suggestions describe the context, transitions, and a recap of Bible readings or previous sessions to remind your group of what has already been studied or give a framework for where the lesson is heading. The second page gives a visual representation of the activity from the Personal Study Guide. A teaching outline helps guide your members through the activity and the debrief discussion.

Key Concept: Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Notes

CHART: Direct your group to page 22 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled "Four Soils, Four Responses." Recreate the chart on a board so you can record the group's findings as they interact with Scripture.

Four Soils, Four Responses

Read Luke 8:4-15. Record what Jesus said each type of soil represented, any corresponding obstacles to faith, and how to overcome those obstacles.

THE SEED ALONG THE PATH	THE SEED ON THE ROCK
THE SEED AMONG THORNS	THE SEED IN GOOD GROUND

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Luke 8:4-15.

ENGAGE: Form three smaller groups and assign each group a type of unfruitful soil from the parable. Instruct the groups to talk through the following questions and write down their thoughts on the chart in their PSG: (1) What did Jesus say the type of soil represented? (2) What are the obstacles that create barriers to faith? (3) How might you have overcome such obstacles to receive God's Word in faith and grow and bear fruit in your life?

REGROUP: After a few minutes, invite a volunteer from each of the groups to present their findings. Write down their discussion points on the chart on the board and encourage the other groups to fill in the details on their PSG.

DISCUSS: How does Jesus's explanation for the seed in the good ground contrast with that of the other soils? (Record responses on the board: "hold on"; "enduring"; "produce fruit.")

- Group Activity
- Interactive Questions
- Theological Applications

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4) TAKE THE NEXT STEPS

After the recap of the activity, help your group take the next steps with the day's Scripture lesson by walking them through the Head, Heart, and Hands applications. Invite volunteers to share and discuss answers to the questions for their mutual benefit. Then take prayer requests and praises as you wrap up your group time. Space is provided to jot those down in your guide for prayer during the following week. And finally, guide your group to read and pray through the designated psalm, focusing your thoughts and words once more upon God's Word as you conclude the session.

Key Concept: Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.

HANDS: Transformed hearts produce fruitful hands. As our hearts overflow with spiritual fruit, we show kindness and generosity to others. And because we love others, we desire to share the good news of the gospel with them so that they too can be transformed from the inside out. Pray for the Holy Spirit to prepare and soften the soil—the hearts—of unbelievers, and pray He will prepare you to share the gospel with them.

For whom will you pray and share the gospel this week?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Read Isaiah 55:10-11. Reflect on how this passage shows God's plan and sovereignty as His Word goes out.
- Spend some time reflecting on your personal walk with Jesus: What fruit are you producing in faith? What obstacles challenge your fruit-bearing, and how can you address those obstacles?
- Consider how you might be sowing, planting, or watering the seed of the gospel in your conversations with others, and evaluate how you may need to approach those conversations specifically.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 23 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 81:10-14 with your group. Thank God for giving us His Word and His gospel, and pray for your group to be people who listen to God's Word and obey it.

REFERENCES

1. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, vol. 1, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 73-94.
2. *Thabiti Anyabwile, Teaching Jesus in Luke*, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary* (Daeleville: Holman Reference, 2018), 45-66.

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- Application Questions
- Scripture-Based Prayer
- Prayer Requests

THE SON HAS TRUTH

By David McLemore



Theologian A. W. Tozer wrote, “What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.”¹

That statement raises an important question: Where did you get your thoughts about God?

There will come moments in your life when your ideas about God won’t remain theoretical. You will suffer, and in suffering, what you believe about God will either sustain you or crush you. And what’s more, one day you will face death, and what you believe about God will either be your hope or your terror.

So, where can you find thoughts about God that are true to who He actually is? The answer is from His self-revelation. God wants you to know Him. He doesn’t want you walking through life in the dark about the most important questions. He wants you to know way down deep that at the very bedrock of your existence is the everlasting arms of the good God who loves you and wants you to know how deep His love for you really is. That’s what the whole Bible is about. This volume draws our attention to that reality by showing how God’s truth is revealed most fully and finally in His Son.

THE SON

We worship a triune God, so what we see in Jesus, the Son, is who God is. In other words, there is no version of God that doesn’t look like Jesus.

The passages explored in this volume show how Jesus reveals God not in fragments but in fullness. He is the Word of God (John 1:1). He is the King of God’s kingdom (Luke 19:28-40). He is the Creator of all (Mark 4; Matt. 14:22-33). He is the divine Healer (Luke 8:41-56; Mark 7:24-37). He is the gracious Provider (Matt. 14:13-21). He has power over death (John 11:38-44). He gives sight to the blind (John 9). He’s the Seeker of the lost (Luke 19:1-10). He is coming again (Mark 13). He is the Mediator of the new covenant (Mark 14:22-24).

In Jesus, truth became visible, touchable, knowable. And the amazing thing is not just that Jesus revealed truth but the beauty of the truth He revealed.

In Jesus we see the truth of God's personhood through His words, compassion, and authority. We see His heart.

In Jesus we see the truth of God's personhood through His words, compassion, and authority. We see His heart. We see who He really is way down deep. And what we find explicitly in Jesus, backed up by His Word, is a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, who won't let injustice reign but will settle it once and for all (see Ex. 34:6-7).

THE SON HAS TRUTH

In Jesus, truth puts on flesh. Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). In Jesus, truth became visible, touchable, knowable. And the amazing thing is not just that Jesus revealed truth but the beauty of the truth He revealed. He is not just a creator; He's a redeemer. He's not just sovereign; He's loving. He's not just powerful; He's tender. He's not just transcendent; He's immanent. He's not just a judge; He's a just and merciful one.

The truth is that God is not just a god but the best possible God. He's perfect. There is no flaw in Him. There is no downside to Him. There is nothing in Him that should turn our hearts away from Him. There is nothing in Him that our hearts don't long for and desperately need. Again and again, the passages in this volume show us God's heart toward sinners and sufferers. When we sin, He forgives. When we mourn, He comforts. When we stray, He seeks. When we are betrayed, He stands by us. When we die, He welcomes us and will one day resurrect us.

Consider what Jesus shows us of God's heart for sinners and sufferers like us. He welcomes the weary and heavy laden (Matt. 11:28-29). He receives all who come to Him (John 6:37). He has compassion on the broken (Luke 7:13; Mark 1:40-41). He lays down His life for us (John 10:11; 13:1). He intercedes for us now (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). He one day will make all things new (Rev. 21:5).

Jesus is good and does good, and He loves you. He wants you to know that way down deep. That's not just written in the Bible but proved on the cross. What is there in God that you don't need? What do you need that doesn't have an answer in God?

God's revelation not only corrects our view of Him but, perhaps more importantly, reveals His view of us. He loves us. He wants to save us. The truth of God is His lovingkindness toward us. That's a truth worth believing and obeying.

1. A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (Cambridge, UK: The Lutterworth Press, 2022), 1.

David McLemore aims through his teachings and writings to help believers read the Bible faithfully and see how every part of Scripture points to Jesus Christ. He writes on his website, *Things of the Sort*, and serves as an elder at his church.

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

UNIT 25

THE TRUTH OF HIS POWER



MARK; LUKE



MEMORY VERSES

“He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Silence! Be still!’ The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Then he said to them, ‘Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?’ And they were terrified and asked one another, ‘Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!’”

—Mark 4:39-41



POWER OF GOD'S WORD

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 8:4-15

CONTEXT

Jesus traveled from town to town preaching the good news of the kingdom with His disciples. Jesus's preaching ministry was both the context and the subject of His parable of the sower. As Jesus traveled, He indiscriminately spread the seeds of the gospel far and wide. The four Gospels record a diversity of responses to Jesus's teaching: rejection, doubt, fear, joy, sadness, anger, and belief. In the parable of the sower, Jesus classified people's responses into four general categories as He illustrated the power of the Word and the danger of rejecting it.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.

As you examine Luke 8:4-15:

- Discover why Jesus taught in parables: to expose who truly was seeking truth.
- Recognize that we are transformed and bear fruit when we hear and trust the gospel.



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TIMELINE

Jesus Appoints His Twelve Disciples (Luke 6:12-16)

SESSION STUDY: Jesus Teaches and Explains the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15)

Jesus Heals Two Daughters (Luke 8:40-56)

Jesus Delivers His Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17-49)

Jesus Calms a Storm (Luke 8:22-25)

Daily Readings

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Day 1: Luke 8:1-8 | ☐ Day 4: Mark 4:10-12 |
| ☐ Day 2: Luke 8:9-15 | ☐ Day 5: Mark 4:13-20 |
| ☐ Day 3: Mark 4:1-9 | ☐ Day 6: Psalm 81 |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

IF WE TRULY SEEK GOD'S WISDOM, HIS TRUTH WILL BE REVEALED TO US (LUKE 8:4-10).

Circle the four types of soil on which the seed is scattered. Then underline the phrases that describe what happened to the seed in each soil type.

4 As a large crowd was gathering, and people were coming to Jesus from every town, he said in a parable, 5 "A sower went out to sow his seed. As he sowed, some seed fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the sky devoured it. 6 Other seed fell on the rock; when it grew up, it withered away, since it lacked moisture. 7 Other seed fell among thorns; the thorns grew up with it and choked it. 8 Still other seed fell on good ground; when it grew up, it produced fruit: a hundred times what was sown." As he said this, he called out, "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen." 9 Then his disciples asked him, "What does this parable mean?" 10 So he said, "The secrets of the kingdom of God have been given for you to know, but to the rest it is in parables, so that 'Looking they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'"

As crowds gathered around Jesus, He told them a parable about a sower who scattered seed. The agricultural setting would have been familiar to Jesus's audience, and the simple descriptions easy to follow. The sower and the seed remain the same in each example, but the condition of the soil changes throughout, producing drastically different results.

A path consisted of very hard, packed-down soil. The seed that fell there could not penetrate the soil and was trampled or eaten by birds. Likewise, neither the seed scattered on rocky ground nor the seed sown among thorns survived for long due to the constraints of their environments. By contrast, the final seed nurtured by good soil grew and produced fruit in abundance. After reciting the parable, Jesus said, "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen" (v. 8).

LEADER NOTE: Jesus's call not only to hear His words but to listen closely is found throughout the synoptic Gospels (Matt. 11:15; Mark 13:9; Luke 14:35). In John's Gospel, the sheep that belong to the Good Shepherd hear His voice and follow Him. Jesus's desire for His listeners was that they would not only hear His words but would heed them, building their lives on Him and bearing fruit for the kingdom of God (Matt. 7:24-27; John 15:7-8; Jas. 1:22-25).

What does Jesus's exhortation to listen tell us about Jesus's desire for His audience?

At the conclusion of the parable, the disciples realized that though they heard Jesus's words, they did not understand Jesus's spiritual point, so they asked Him to explain it. Before answering, Jesus briefly explained the purpose and limitation of parables.

Jesus's parables contain within them nuggets of kingdom truth, but these mysteries cannot be unlocked merely by hearing or personally dissecting their component parts. Their wisdom must be given, and only Jesus holds the keys to their riches (Col. 2:3). The disciples were granted this wisdom because they asked Him. Like Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8, Jesus called out and invited all to pay attention. The disciples came to Him in faith and were rewarded with understanding. The rest only heard a story about a sower scattering seed.

LEADER NOTE: Jesus's parables served a two-fold function. For the disciples who had ears to hear by faith, the parables revealed truths about the kingdom of heaven. But for "the rest" (those who had closed their eyes and hardened their hearts; see Matt. 15:15), the parables concealed understanding. In this way, the parables were a type of judgment on the unbelieving crowds, clouding God's mysteries. Thus, the people were divided into two groups: those who were given spiritual understanding of God's Word and those who were not (1 Cor. 1:10-16). Those two groups are still present today wherever God's Word is communicated.

How does the fact that wisdom must be sought in a Person change the way we approach Bible study?

Notes



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

ILLUMINATION OF SCRIPTURE: Because of the vast difference between God's wisdom and ours and because of humanity's sinful state, human beings are incapable, on our own, of fully grasping spiritual truth without being aided by the Holy Spirit through illumination. When it comes to understanding the meaning of God's Word, Christians do not rely ultimately upon human reason in interpretation, nor do we rely solely upon an institution or body of scholars. Instead, a Christian's ultimate reliance is upon the work of the Spirit of God, who illuminates the Scriptures in the heart and mind (John 14:15-18; 16:7-15).

Notes



SCAN ME

Bonus Content

Scan this QR code to see a comparative view of the parable of the sower in the Synoptic Gospels.

GOD'S WORD NEEDS TO BE HEARD AND INTERNALIZED FOR TRANSFORMATION (LUKE 8:11-15).

Highlight how Jesus defines these parts of the parable: seed, seed along the path, seed on the rock, seed among thorns, and the seed on good ground.

11 “This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. **12** The seed along the path are those who have heard and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. **13** And the seed on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy. Having no root, these believe for a while and fall away in a time of testing. **14** As for the seed that fell among thorns, these are the ones who, when they have heard, go on their way and are choked with worries, riches, and pleasures of life, and produce no mature fruit. **15** But the seed in the good ground—these are the ones who, having heard the word with an honest and good heart, hold on to it and by enduring, produce fruit.”

Jesus explained that the seed in the parable represents God's Word. A sower scatters seed with a purpose—he intends for the seed he scatters to germinate, thrive, and produce fruit. Although Jesus knew that not every gospel seed would be received, He preached with the expectation that some would bear fruit. For others, there would be obstacles.

Seed sown on hardened hearts cannot bring salvation, as Satan quickly snatches the truth away to prevent understanding and belief. The gospel offers abundant life, but the thief seeks to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). Seed sown on shallow hearts, though received joyfully, cannot endure for lack of nourishment (“no root”; Luke 8:13). Without the work of the Holy Spirit to transform the heart, shallow belief falls away during testing. Seed sown on a heart rife with thorns—“worries, riches, and pleasures of life” (v. 14)—is slowly strangled as worldliness and misplaced priorities prevent living faith.

LEADER NOTE: A common concern that arises when studying this parable comes in trying to understand which of the soils represents people who are saved versus those who are not. Darrell Bock stated that this concern misunderstands Jesus's message and “to ask this question of each soil is to misdirect the parable's emphasis. Jesus is not communicating the minimum response required to receive blessing. Rather, he is instructing the disciples on fruitfulness by pointing out obstacles that prevent such a response.”¹

Which of these obstacles to receiving the gospel have you encountered in yourself or a loved one?

Key Concept: Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Scripture teaches us that Jesus is the way to salvation, and following Him by faith with the Holy Spirit will lead to true transformation.

With such powerful obstacles at war against the gospel, it is a miracle that any seeds of faith survive to bear fruit. Yet that is exactly what happens with the fourth seed—this person receives the Word and holds fast to it, so that it endures and bears plentiful fruit. The difference lies in the soil of the heart. But how is it possible to have “an honest and good heart” (v. 15) suitable to receive God’s Word and bear fruit? This requires the work of the Holy Spirit, who exchanges a heart of stone for a heart of flesh, enabling believers to trust God and obey with a heart of love (Ezek. 11:19-20).

LEADER NOTE: What does it look like to “hold on” to God’s Word to “produce fruit” (Luke 8:15)? It looks like abiding in Christ. Jesus said: “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and so prove to be my disciples” (John 15:7-8). Believers who bear fruit do so by persevering in their faith in Christ, internalizing His Word, and praying for the Spirit to produce fruit through them. Then, as they walk in the Spirit, they bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:16,22-23).

How should the expectation that some seeds will bear fruit motivate us to spread gospel truth?

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

“We win the [spiritual] war for the Word when we look to bear fruit with patience (Jas 1:2-4). We’re not trying to rush into maturity or skip the things that produce growth. We just steadily read, believe, and apply the Bible, and let patience have its perfect work in our lives.”²

–Thabiti Anyabwile

Notes



ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: As your group arrives, ask who has a green thumb and who doesn't. Allow a few volunteers to give examples of their gardening successes or failures.

TRANSITION: Even the greatest gardener has successes and failures. Today, we're going to discuss a popular parable Jesus told about a sower who scattered seed. The seed fell on different types of soil, but only one soil had just the right conditions to allow the seed to take root and bear fruit.

CONTEXT

SAY: A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus often taught in parables, so much so that one-third of all Jesus's teachings were shared as parables. When interpreting a parable, it's important to ask what the main point of the parable is. One of the major themes of Luke's Gospel is how to get faith and use it in daily living. Jesus demonstrated this by teaching the disciples that faith comes through receiving the Word of God.

RECAP

ASK: As you read the passage recounting the parable of the sower this week, what stood out to you that you might not have noticed before?

REVIEW: Jesus told the parable of the sower to the large crowd that followed Him, and as Scripture states, He never taught them without a parable. Privately, His disciples asked Him what the parable meant. Jesus explained that the sower represents someone who shares the gospel of the kingdom. Just like a seed brings forth life, the gospel is life to those who believe. A seed can't grow unless it's planted; similarly the Word of God must be planted in someone's heart to grow and bear fruit. Yet the growth is dependent upon the type of "soil" into which the seed is planted.

TRANSITION: As we dig into the passage together, think about situations in your own life when you've tried to share the gospel with others and it didn't seem to go so well. Maybe the person responded joyfully but soon stopped going to church and living for Jesus after the newness wore off. Consider the soil of your own heart as well.



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Key Concept: Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 22 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “Four Soils, Four Responses.” Recreate the chart on a board so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with Scripture.

Notes

Four Soils, Four Responses

Read Luke 8:4-15. Record what Jesus said each type of soil represented, any corresponding obstacles to faith, and how to overcome those obstacles.

THE SEED ALONG THE PATH	THE SEED ON THE ROCK
THE SEED AMONG THORNS	THE SEED IN GOOD GROUND

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Luke 8:4-15.

ENGAGE: Form three smaller groups and assign each group a type of unfruitful soil from the parable. Instruct the groups to talk through the following questions and write down their thoughts on the chart in their PSG: (1) What did Jesus say the type of soil represented? (2) What are the obstacles that create barriers to faith? (3) How might you have overcome such obstacles to receive God’s Word in faith and grow and bear fruit in your life?

REGROUP: After a few minutes, invite a volunteer from each of the groups to present their findings. Write down their discussion points on the chart on the board and encourage the other groups to fill in the details on their PSG.

DISCUSS: How does Jesus’s explanation for the seed in the good ground contrast with that of the other soils? (*Record responses on the board: “hold on”; “enduring”; “produce fruit.”*)

Notes



SUMMARIZE: Display **Pack Item 3: Kingdom Growth** and highlight specifically the “Believers’ Mission” section for the following. Say: “As Christians, it is our calling to share the gospel with others as we go about our daily lives. The sad truth is that not everyone who hears the gospel will follow Jesus. Some will reject the gospel outright; others will fall away through hardships and distractions. Only the good soil of a good heart produces fruit that lasts. In 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, the apostle Paul taught that gospel growth is often a team effort. We don’t know when we share the gospel whether we are clearing out thorns, picking out rocks, tilling the soil, or watering a planted seed. All Jesus calls us to do is be faithful to His commission to share the gospel.

DEBRIEF

How should this parable encourage us as we share the gospel with others?

What “fruit” should we expect to see in our lives as believers in God’s Word?

SUMMARIZE

The seed of the gospel is not sown in a climate-controlled, curated greenhouse. Instead, the gospel goes forth in a world that is openly hostile to it. That any of us receive the gospel and hold fast to it shows God’s miraculous mercy and kindness to us. Let us humbly pray for the gospel seed to take root in the lives of others so we can delight in the harvest.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 23). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: Not only do we need God’s help to understand His Word, we also need His help to “hold on” to His Word. Any time we hear God’s truth, spiritual warfare commences in which Satan attempts to steal away those truths so we forget what we have learned (Jas. 1:22-25). But God’s power is greater than the devil’s

What are some ways we can keep God’s Word in our mind and heart?



HEART: The parable of the sower is about the battle taking place over the soil of people’s hearts. This parable gives us key markers to look for in our own lives to see if gospel transformation has taken place. Do we care enough about God’s Word to ask Him for help to understand and believe it? Do we hold fast to it when difficulties and distractions come? Are we bearing fruit in keeping with repentance and faith? These are evidences of true transformation.

What evidence do you see in your life that the Holy Spirit has given you “an honest and good heart”?



HANDS: Transformed hearts produce fruitful hands. As our hearts overflow with spiritual fruit, we show kindness and generosity to others. And because we love others, we desire to share the good news of the gospel with them so that they too can be transformed from the inside out. Pray for the Holy Spirit to prepare and soften the soil—the hearts—of unbelievers, and pray He will prepare you to share the gospel with them.

For whom will you pray and share the gospel this week?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Read Isaiah 55:10-11. Reflect on how this passage shows God's plan and sovereignty as His Word goes out.
- Spend some time reflecting on your personal walk with Jesus: What fruit are you producing in faith? What obstacles challenge your fruit-bearing, and how can you address those obstacles?
- Consider how you might be sowing, planting, or watering the seed of the gospel in your conversations with others, and evaluate how you may need to approach those conversations specifically.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 23 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 81:10-14 with your group. Thank God for giving us His Word and His gospel, and pray for your group to be people who listen to God's Word and obey it.

References

1. Darrell L. Bock, Luke: 1:1–9:50, vol. 1, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 733–34.
2. Thabiti Anyabwile, Exalting Jesus in Luke, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2018), 145–46.

JESUS'S USE OF PARABLES

Adapted from an article by R. D. Fowler



What is a parable? The word *parable* means “to place alongside.” A parable is a figurative saying that illustrates a spiritual truth by comparing common experiences. Of the approximately sixty parables in the Synoptic Gospels, fifty-two are narratives. A parable, however, can also be a similitude (Matt. 13:33), an allegory (Ezek. 17:2; 24:3; Matt. 13:18,24,36), a proverb (Prov. 1:1,6; Mark 3:23), a riddle (Ps. 78:2; Mark 7:17), or a symbol (Heb. 9:9).

Many of us are familiar with Jesus's parables, though we may not understand exactly what they are or why Jesus used them. In Matthew 13:10, the disciples approached Jesus and asked, “Why are you speaking to them in parables?” This was the larger company of followers that included the Twelve (Mark 4:10). At this point, there was growing hostility toward Jesus. The disciples recognized a change had taken place in His method of teaching. His reply indicated a two-fold purpose in His use of parables to both reveal and conceal the mystery of the kingdom of God.

FIRST-CENTURY TEACHING TOOL

Jesus was unparalleled in His use of parables, though He was not the first to use them. Parables were in use before the first century by writers such as Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. They were a common teaching method of Rabbis Hillel and Shammai between 60 BC and AD 30. Later rabbis also used parables in the Gemara and the Midrash.

Parables were also a part of earlier oral tradition in the Old Testament. Of the parables in the Old Testament, none is more familiar or more closely linked in style to Jesus's narrative parables than the parable that the prophet Nathan told

King David (2 Sam. 12:1-14) to expose his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. The parable had an immediate impact.

IN JESUS'S TEACHING

Approximately one-third of all Jesus's sayings in Scripture were parables. Jesus's parables demonstrate Jesus's knowledge and understanding of human life in a variety of arenas, such as agriculture, agronomy, fishing, and others.

When we consider why Jesus used parables, we first recognize that His doing so was a fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 6:9-10). Additionally, they were effective for teaching the multitudes who followed Him because they would have been familiar with this form of instruction.

The old adage “a picture is worth a thousand words” applies to Jesus's parables. The word pictures He painted in the minds of those who gathered to hear Him teach were precisely what made them effective for revealing truths. In Matthew 13, Jesus painted word pictures of a sower planting seeds and a man sowing good seed in his field only to find tares growing in his crop. Matthew also recorded Jesus's teachings referring to a mustard seed, leaven, hidden treasure, a merchant seeking pearls, and a dragnet of fish. All of those subjects, even now, paint vivid pictures in our minds.

Jesus's parables were likewise timeless in their presentation. The message communicated in the first century communicates in the same way today. The parables of the sower, prodigal son, and the good Samaritan still communicate spiritual truths in the modern world. I am not a farmer, but I can easily grasp the parable of the sower and the different soils in modern agricultural practices.

*Those who seek a more complete relationship with Jesus
desire to understand the parables and their meaning.
They seek to understand what His parables reveal.*

Parables also make theological truth easier to understand. Similarly, today we employ various forms of multimedia to present and reinforce the message of the gospel in sermons and Bible studies. Like the parables, these help people understand the truth of Scripture more easily than a purely theological discourse might. Parables are clearly a tool for revealing truth.

Jesus's use of parables was paradoxical, however, in that they both revealed and hid truths. A paradox is something that contradicts itself yet remains true. Jesus said the parables were intended to reveal the truth and make it easier to grasp for those for whom the truth was intended. Equally true, however, they were intended to hide truth from those who reject Him (Matt. 13:11-15).

EFFECTIVENESS IN JESUS'S DAY

Were Jesus parables effective for both purposes? The dogmatic answer, of course, is "Jesus used them, therefore, they were effective!" How, though, could they be effective for both revealing and concealing the truth at the same time?

The answer to that question is indicated by the different responses to Jesus's parables. In the multitudes that followed Him were two distinct groups of people. Both heard the parable of the sower; it was a good story, and it caught everyone's attention—but only one group sought to understand the spiritual truth the parable taught.

Those who rejected Jesus, those who were unreceptive to the message of the kingdom of God, listened but did not hear. All who heard the parable of the sower could understand the truth that seeds sown in different soils produced different

outcomes. The seed sown on the hard ground does not take root and does not produce a crop. For those who rejected Jesus, this was the only point to the parable. For those with no desire to understand, the true meaning remains hidden.

On the other hand, Jesus told His disciples they had been given the honor of understanding His parables. Yet they had to ask what the parable of the sower meant. For those who followed Jesus, who were spiritually committed to Him and whom the Spirit was calling to that kind of commitment, the parables served to awaken within them the desire to know and understand more completely. The disciples desired to know the hidden meaning. Sometimes the meaning became clear over time. Other times they needed help and asked for clarification.

We can correctly conclude, then, that Jesus's parables were effective for both concealing and revealing truth. The same is equally true today. Those who seek a more complete relationship with Jesus desire to understand the parables and their meaning. They seek to understand what His parables reveal. Unfortunately for those who reject Jesus, whose hearts are hardened against God, the meaning of Jesus's parables remains concealed.

R. D. Fowler serves as pastor at Bethel Baptist Church in Lincoln, Nebraska.