

CONVERSATION GUIDE

1. Take 5-10 minutes to discuss last week's sermon, **Surprising Faith**, covering Luke 7:1-10, 36-50.
2. Having now heard the sermon last Sunday, what was the "surprise?"

READ Luke 8:1-15

DISCUSS and REFLECT Jesus preaches in every city and village with the twelve disciples and some named women, who provide for Him from their own possessions. Then Jesus tells the parable of the sower who sows seed in different kinds of soil. Each soil produces a different response to the seed and illustrates how men and women can hear God's Word and behave differently.

Jesus' Ministry of Preaching (8:1-3)

Today it is hard for us to appreciate how revolutionary Luke's picture of Jesus' ministry is. Women's involvement in supporting Jesus' ministry is an example. This passage is one of several unique to Luke that focus on women (others include 1:5-39, Elizabeth; 2:36-38, Anna the prophetess; 7:36-50, the sinful woman; 10:38-42, Martha and Mary; 13:10-17, the healing of the crippled woman; 15:8-10, the parable of the woman with the lost coin; 18:1-8, the parable of the woman and the judge). Many men of the time believed that women were not even to be seen, much less heard.

So, what is this passage say to us about the availability and applicability of God's word to women?

These three verses are important not only because women are included but also because of the variety of women mentioned. All these women contributed their resources to Jesus' ministry. As beneficiaries of God's grace, they supported Jesus' ministry. Receiving leads to giving.

What does the past and present of these women tell you about who God's word is meant to reach?

This is the only gospel to mention that certain women supported Jesus' movement out of their own means. The parable of the shrewd manager ([Luke 16:1-13](#)) teaches the importance of using money wisely. Here, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna are named alongside the twelve

disciples because of their financial support for Jesus' work.

What is surprising about the mention of three women in these verses and their willingness and ability to provide funds for Jesus' preaching journeys?

The Parable of the Sower (8:4-15)

For Jesus, the preaching of the kingdom was a revelation of a unique message, not one opinion among a melting pot of ideas. The parable of the sower shows the variety of responses to the word Jesus sows in his preaching.

We often think of evangelism and preaching as something that happens quickly. But the picture of a seed makes us think of a farmer who prepares the ground, sows seed, waters and then must wait for the crop. Producing a crop is a process over time just as the message of the word also takes time to bear fruit.

Discuss: When we hear the Word, we all come to the same conclusions at the same time.

Jesus lived in an agrarian culture, so his parables often use farming imagery. In that time a farmer would walk a path through a field and distribute seed from a bag draped over his shoulder. So, Jesus tells of four places where seed lands—on a path, on rocks, among thorns and in good soil.

Some seed falls on a path, where it is exposed to sun, birds and travelers. Some seed lands on thin topsoil with a layer of rock underneath. This allows a plant to grow quickly but with the sunshine the plant, unable to send its roots deeper, withers. Still other soil is infested with weeds. Palestinian weeds could grow up to six feet tall, gobbling the land's nutrients. The seed on the good soil, however, produces a hundredfold.

What is Jesus trying to teach the disciples with this parable? The people?

After Jesus tells the story, the disciples ask why he is using parables. In response, Jesus observes that knowledge of the "mysteries" of the kingdom of God has been given to his disciples. Numerous points are made here. First, the disciples have been privileged to understand these things. Second, the passive "is given" indicates that the gift has come from God. Third, what is given involves secrets about the kingdom of God. So, the message of the seed is

related to the promise of the kingdom of God. Fourth, others get parables as a judgment.

Did Jesus tell parables to hide the message?

What does it mean that a parable can be a judgment?

When people reject God's word, are they being punished by God when He makes them unable to understand?

It is likely that the people's lack of understanding was a result rather than the purpose of his teaching. They failed to understand because God had confirmed their previous decision to reject the message. "They would not see before; now they could not, God having given them up to the blindness which they had chosen."

"Mystery" is an important term. Like Daniel who unlocked the mystery hidden in an already revealed dream. Jesus is revealing further detail and fresh twists in God's plan, but those details fit together with the program that God has already promised. These twists and turns are being revealed to the disciples in these parables.

If the disciples were privileged to understand God's word, why did they have to ask for the meaning of the parable?

Now Jesus turns to explain the parable. The seed is the word...the preaching of the kingdom (v. 10). The seed on the path represents those who are completely closed to the message...so it never grows nor bears fruit. The seed on the rock represents a message that falls into a person's heart but penetrates only shallowly. There is initial response, but the engagement the word produced at the start does not last.

The thorny soil represents those who are choked out of a walk with God by life's distractions. The world's worries, riches and pleasures take away any benefit the seed/soil had to offer. They swallow up any opportunity for fruit to come to maturity.

The good soil shows those who hear the word and hold fast to it. They possess an honest and good heart and so bear fruit with patience. The mention of patience (*persevering*) is important. If we care about the world's respect or are too weak to resist temptation, we will not hold on to the word with patience; we may fall away, or our potential for fruitfulness may be choked out.

The results of fruitfulness as it relates to the soil is readily obvious, so what then is the 'mystery' of this parable?

Why is this parable explained so thoroughly?

This parable sums up the different ways the word is received over a lifetime of exposure. It takes time to fall away from an initial attraction to the word. Only over time do the pleasures of life erode the word's effectiveness. We need to cling to the word in patient faith. If we desire to be fruitful we must hold fast to God and his message of hope. We focus either on God's promise or on our circumstances. Which we choose makes a difference.

APPLY

Discuss the following...When we minister through preaching we get instant results.

MEMORIZE Luke 8:8

Do you have a call to preach? Or to support the preacher?

Matthew Henry's Commentary, The IVP New Testament Commentary, The Bible Panorama, Asbury Bible Commentary