

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Consider the Soil

By Sharon K. Griffiee

The gospel of Christ has always been a stumbling block to those who seek signs or proof, instead of the personal Savior of their soul. To counter these false expectations Jesus taught the **Parable of the Sower**. [See Luke 8:4-15; Matthew 13:3-23; Mark 4:3-20]

Luke 8:4-8 (NIV) - While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." When he said this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

Jesus illustrates through this parable that no matter how much zeal a disciple of Jesus might have to sow the seed, *the word of God*, into people's lives, not everyone will gladly receive it. In witnessing to unbelievers then, it is helpful to understand that the condition of a person's heart is the key to them receiving the word of God. As Jesus called out to the crowd (verse 8), it is those who have *spiritual* ears to hear, that will gladly hear and warmly welcome His message. Those with open ears and a ready heart to receive will be attentively listening and considering what is being said. This is good soil – good ground!

Luke 8:8 (KJV) - And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold.

Because Christ came to sow the world with truth, Jesus' followers, likewise, must go forth to sow truth, the incorruptible word of God.

1 Peter 1:23 (KJV) - Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Peter was stating that this *new birth* experience, this change in a person's life will not die, because it takes place through God's word, which is imperishable. While everything else withers and dies, God's Word stands forever.

Bear in mind, however, that while Christ's followers endeavor to impress hearts with the incorruptible

word of God, Satan has his own plan. Because he and his word are corrupt, he is constantly on the move seeking to sow the seeds of error. His plan is to make the word of God of no effect. His objective is to thwart the work of the Spirit of God. He sets out to paralyze the spiritual potential of men and women. As a result, they hear the word with their natural ears, but do not understand it. They do not discern that its truth applies to them. They do not see their *personal need* for God's word. Blinded, they blow off the message of Christ as something that does not concern them. Therefore, the truth they so desperately need, which God has sent them, makes no lasting impression. Their hearts gradually become hardened.

Hebrews 3:15 (NIV) - As has just been said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."

As you try to share *the Word* with unbelievers, in or out of prison, you will likely come across those who are not sincere in their inquiry. As one inmate wrote, "They ask you questions about Jesus and the Word, and then they want you to prove it."

Here we go again with the proof issue that Jesus addressed in the "Parable of the Sower". Anyone who wants proof, *before* they will believe, is someone who is not willing to receive *Jesus, the Word*, through faith. (See: **John 1:1-5, 12-14**)

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV) - But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

How, then, does one acquire this faith to believe?

Romans 10:13-17 (KJV) - For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Brothers and sisters when the word of God lives and abides in *good soil*, it is being *heard repeatedly*. Faith comes! It has to! This is awesome!

But what about those who challenge the ones sent?

Always look to Jesus for answers. When Jesus was on earth he dealt with people all the time who tried to disprove everything He said. They questioned His authority because He was a carpenter’s son from the poor village of Nazareth. (**Matthew 13:55-58**) When the Jewish leaders came against Jesus, He told them:

John 5:46-47 (NIV) – “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?”

Jesus knew the reality of the situation, that nothing could be gained by staying and arguing with those who had their ears closed to the gospel message. Not only that, but even after miraculous signs were given some of the Jews still would not believe in Jesus.

John 12:37 (NIV) - Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.

Following the example of Jesus, it is best to refrain from arguing with those who have hardened their hearts against the word of God. Just as Jesus’ authority was challenged, your authority as a believer may be challenged. Unbelievers will come up with all kinds of reasons to disobey the gospel. They may challenge you because you have not been to a seminary, or received a formal bible education, or hold credentials with a certain denomination. They may even challenge you if you are a woman. The important thing brothers and sisters, is to be a man or woman approved by God. After all, God knows the condition of *your heart*. If you are a believer in both *word and deed*, the soil of your heart is *good ground*. Paul shared this truth with the Thessalonians.

I Thessalonians 2:3-4 (NIV) - For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts.

Be faithful witnesses, despite the opposition. As you live the life of faith as a follower of Jesus Christ, in front of others, it is a given, you will face opposition. Why? Those who walk by faith in Jesus are an irritation to those who walk by natural sight. Take the example of Stephen. Here was a man of faith.

Acts 6:8-10 (NIV) - Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue...who began to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

Stephen’s life-style so irritated the opposition that they were, “*cut to the heart*”.

Acts 7:54-56 (KJV) - When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

We know the story. They dragged Stephen out of the city and stoned him to death. However, Stephen, a faithful witness approved of God, said, “*Lord, do not hold this sin against them*”. (**Acts 7:60 - NIV**)

In Summary: There will always be those, who influenced by the adversary, want to argue against the truth. But, Jesus did not spend time in argument or debate with man. Neither should we. People swayed by the adversary, do not respond to logic, intellect, or theological debate. In the “Parable of the Sower”, Jesus says, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.” It is spiritual law, if you sow the word of God in good soil, it *will* produce a harvest.

Questions for Personal or Group Study

(Please do not mail to CA for grading):

- 1) The Gospel has always been a “stumbling block” to those who seek signs or proof *before* they will believe. How did Jesus’ “Parable of the Sower” counter these false expectations?
- 2) Whom was Jesus specifically calling out to when He said, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear?” How did Jesus characterize this type of soil?
- 3) No matter how much zeal a person has in witnessing to unbelievers, what is the *key* to them receiving the seed, the incorruptible word of God?
- 4) Describe Satan’s intent to sow seeds of error.
- 5) Jesus dealt with people who tried to disprove everything He said. Followers of Jesus will also face opposition. Explain the challenger’s irritation.
- 6) What was Steven’s reward from God for being a faithful witness?