

# Story 1: The Sower and the Soils

This Bible study focuses on a passage in the Gospel of Mark in the New Testament.

Stories that Make You Think:

## **Mark 4:1-20**

### **Objective:**

To understand that different types of people have different responses to Jesus' teaching; to awaken the desire to be a person who has ears to hear what Jesus says and who lives a life that is productive and fruitful.

### **Introductory Questions:**

What teacher do you remember the most?

Why do you think he or she was a good teacher?

### **Introduction:**

Jesus was a good teacher. He often used stories in his teaching. These stories are called "parables" from the Greek word meaning to lay along side, to lie parallel. These stories, taken from everyday life, had a meaning that "lay along side" the interesting details of the story. A person who listened carefully, thinking about what Jesus had to say, could learn many things about living. In our discussion today, we are going to read about a typical situation where Jesus used parables to teach. Imagine the scene. Jesus is surrounded by a crowd on the shore of Lake Galilee in Palestine. He wants the crowd to be able to hear his teaching. He gets into a boat and rows out a little ways from shore. The crowd gathers on the shore line. His voice can be heard clearly across the still water. He begins to tell a story...

### **Reading the Passage:**

Have the group read each section before you discuss it. Read the passage silently at first. Then have someone read it aloud. Discuss any words that might be unfamiliar to people in the group.

### **Questions:**

#### **Mark 4:1-9 - The Parable**

1. Over the years, this story has come to be known as "the parable of the sower". Do you think this is the most descriptive title of the story?

2. What other titles might be appropriate?
3. What is the story about?
4. What does it mean to sow grain?
5. What makes the difference in how the plants grow?
6. What are the four kinds of soils?

### **Mark 4: 13-20 - The Meaning of The Parable**

1. Jesus' followers asked him in private what the parable meant. Jesus explicitly explained the meaning that "lay along side" the story about the sower and the different kinds of soil. What does the seed represent?
2. What do the different kinds of soil represent?
3. What happens to the seed in each kind of soil?
4. The four kinds of soil represent four kinds of people - what are the four kinds of people?
5. Why are the birds able to find the seeds on the hard path?
6. What kind of person does this example represent?
7. The shallow soil results in quick growth that fades quickly in the heat. What kind of person does this soil represent?
8. What are the weeds that prevent growth and fruitfulness in a person's life?
9. What do you think is the fruit that is produced by the seed growing in the good soil?

### **Mark 4:10-12 - Why Parables?**

1. Some of Jesus' followers ask for explanations of his stories. Jesus describes different reactions to his teaching. What are the different reactions to Jesus' teaching?
2. How are these reactions related to the story of the sower and the soils?

### **Thought Questions:**

1. Jesus teaches in parables. Who would Jesus be compared to in the story of the sower?

2. In the story, Jesus implies that his teaching is like seeds. What do you think Jesus expects to happen in response to his teaching?
3. What will the different reactions to his teaching be?
4. Jesus ends the story by saying, "Listen, then, if you have ears." What do you think he means by this?
5. Why do you think Jesus told this story?
6. What kind of response would Jesus like people to have to this story?
7. Do people have a choice as to what type of soil they are?
8. Can the type of soil change?
9. What might help break up hard soil? get rid of rocks? pull up weeds?
10. Jesus often used stories as a teaching tool. Why do you think he did this?
11. What do parables or stories accomplish that simple and direct instruction lacks?
12. Do you think Jesus intends to make things clear or obscure by telling stories?
13. What does the parable of the sower indicate about the response to Jesus' teaching?
14. What kind of soil are you?
15. What do you think Jesus would like you to do in response to this story?

**Closing:**

Ask if the group has any questions they would like to ask. Ask permission to say a simple prayer to close the discussion. Ask God to give each one the ability to be like the fruitful and productive soil.