



THE GOSPEL OF
Luke

SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 8:1-15

To understand the different ways people respond to the Gospel and why they respond that way.

A Champion of Women

Chapter 8 begins with Jesus traveling through “cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing good news of the kingdom of God” (Lk. 8:1), and He is not alone. Significantly, “the twelve” are mentioned for the first time since their initial calling in Luke 6:12-16. However, the more controversial group mentioned are the women “who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities” (Lk. 8:2), of whom were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna. This is a remarkable addition for Jesus to include in His ministry. Both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures held women in lower status than men. Joel Green writes, “Even had they never been included in ministries of proclamation and healing, and it would be hard to exclude them from the mission of the seventy-two (10:1–11), in the larger Greco-Roman world even this degree of identification and participation by *women with a traveling teacher* would have been *extraordinary*.”¹ Yet, this is the reality of the kingdom of God: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

The Parable of the Sower

The bulk of this passage covers a parable that Jesus tells regarding a sower. Verses 4 through 8 contain the details of the parable, and then verses 9 through 15 contain the interpretation of the parable. Jesus tells

¹ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 318.

parables a lot in Luke's Gospel, and He tells them for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it is to illustrate a deeper meaning in a digestible manner, and sometimes it is to prevent meaning from being ascertained (Lk. 8:10). Below is a breakdown of the parable itself along with the interpretation of each part.

THE SOWER

The parable begins with the central figure, the sower. He goes out sowing seeds onto a variety of different kinds of ground. Interestingly, the sower is not defined in the interpretation. Jesus is the most rational individual to connect with the sower in the immediate context of the passage, but it's also likely that the sower could be anyone who comes proclaiming the kingdom of God. By context, that would also include the twelve and the named women who were with Jesus, "proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God" (Lk. 8:1). Anytime Jesus' disciples proclaim the kingdom, we must be aware that the seeds of the kingdom will fall on a variety of types of soils.

THE SEED

The seed is simply defined by Jesus as "the word of God." To proclaim the kingdom of God is to proclaim God's words, and not words that we make up or "feel like God is saying," but the very words written in Scripture.

THE PATH

The path is the first of four soils given in Jesus' parable. Jesus says that when the seed hit the ground, it was "trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it" (Lk. 8:5). It would be tempting to interpret this as perhaps the busyness of life or distractions, but Jesus goes on to interpret this as the work of Satan himself: "The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so they they may not believe and be saved" (Lk. 8:12). This does not indicate that people can lose their salvation, but rather that before they are able to receive salvation through faith in Christ, the enemy thwarts their belief.

THE ROCK

The second of the four soils is "the rock" (Lk. 8:5). Jesus says that when the seeds fall on this type of soil, "as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture" (Lk. 8:6). This kind of soil is later interpreted to be those who receive the word but because their belief is not rooted, they eventually fall away when their faith is tested (Lk. 8:13). Again, it would be tempting to interpret this to mean that some could lose their salvation, but the apostle John later reminds us of the reality concerning those who walk away from the faith: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us" (1 Jn. 2:19). True faith is lasting faith. Jesus, referring to His followers as sheep, says: "A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers" (Jn. 10:5). Those who are represented by the rocky soil are like those who get very excited about the idea of faith, but they are not fully committed because their belief is not rooted within them. It's often characterized by highly emotional experiences, but not codified with lasting faith.

THE THORNS

The third kind of soil is the thorny ground, wherein the seed falls into it "and the thorns grew up and choked it" (Lk. 8:7). This soil represents "those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature" (Lk. 8:14). In this third soil sample, again we find a lacking of *real* faith. This is a kind of faith that seems like a nice option when it is most convenient, but is still in competition with the other cares and concerns of a worldly existence. But, as Jesus reminds us in Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." The cares and riches and pleasures that

appeal to the flesh will inevitably win over your affections and choke out your commitment to Christ if your faith in Christ is not firmly fixed as your sole source of joy. That isn't to say that you shouldn't be able to enjoy a movie, or a new piece of furniture, or a sporting event, but rather that those desires are not in competition but subordination to Christ.

THE GOOD SOIL

Finally, we come to the fourth and good soil that represents "those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience" (Lk. 8:15). This is genuine, rooted, singularly focused faith that proves itself true by the fruit it bears. Perhaps the two best indicators of genuine faith is the fruit that it produces and its shelf life. It is long-lasting, enduring, hearty, and plentiful.

The Women With Him

It would be an oversight to not mention anything in detail regarding the women who followed Jesus. That they are mentioned by name reveals how important they were to Jesus' ministry and Luke's recollection of their involvement. Below is a brief breakdown of each of them.

MARY MAGDALENE

Mary Magdalene is the most recognizable name here. Very little is mentioned of her, but that she had "seven demons" removed from her. She is also present at the crucifixion (Lk. 24:10), and John places her as the recipient of the news that Jesus had risen (Jn. 20:1-13). There are some ideas that Mary was a prostitute or even secretly Jesus' wife, but these ideas come from extra-biblical sources that are both biblically and historically inaccurate. The source of Mary as a prostitute comes from a particular pope conflating Mary Magdalene with the woman who anointed Jesus' feet in the chapter before, but that does not seem contextually likely given the way Mary is introduced here. The source of Mary as a secret wife of Jesus comes from the non-canonical, 3rd century *Gnostic Gospel of Philip*. The actual biblical portrait of Mary is that she was simply a woman who had been healed of demonic possession and followed Jesus faithfully.

JOANNA

Joanna is only mentioned once more with Mary Magdalene at the resurrection in Luke 24:10. Joanna's presence here is important because it reveals that not only impoverished people followed Jesus. As the manager of Herod's home, she would have likely been considerably wealthier and more powerful than many of the disciples, and yet here in the description she is simply another disciple.

SUSANNA

Susanna is never mentioned anywhere else, and thus nothing else is known about her other than the fact that she had been either healed from demons or some other infirmity and followed Jesus as a result.

What About Now?

One takeaway is the simple reminder that we are responsible for sowing the seeds of the word of God, but we are not responsible for how well those seeds take root. There are some individuals who are not ready for the word, and thus they will either reject it immediately or move away from it over time. Another takeaway is simply the importance of sowing the seeds of the word of God. God has called us as followers of Jesus to make the disciples by proclaiming the word (Matt. 28:18-20). This passage is a helpful reminder to us that we must always be looking for new ground to sow seeds of the Gospel of grace.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Luke 8:1. Where did Jesus go, and what was He doing? Who was with Him according to verse 1?

2. Read Luke 8:2-3. Who was with Jesus according to verse 2? What was significant about each of them? Why is their names being mentioned important?

Day Two

1. Read Luke 8:4-5. When did Jesus begin to tell the parable? How did the parable begin? What was the first soil mentioned in this parable?

2. Read Luke 8:6-8. What are the second, third, and fourth soil types mentioned?

Day Three

1. Read Luke 8:9-10. Who came to Him asking about the parable? What was Jesus' response?

2. Read Luke 8:11. What did the seed in the parable represent?

Day Four

1. Read Luke 8:12-13. What did the path represent? What happened to the seed on the path? What did the rocky ground represent? What happened to the seed on the rocky ground?

2. Read Luke 8:14-15. What did the thorns represent? What happened to the seed in the thorns. What did the good soil represent? What happened to the seed on the good soil?

Week 30 Discussion: Sowing Seeds

In Luke 8:1-15, Jesus tells the parable of the sower. In it, He explains the importance of sowing seeds of the word of God and the different types of soil that the seed might fall upon. Talk as a group about your experience with sharing the Gospel with other individuals and how different people have responded.

1. Icebreaker: When was the last time you “sowed the seeds” of the word of God?
2. Have you ever led anyone to Christ? Share your experience with the group.
3. Have you ever shared the Gospel with someone only for them to reject what you said? Share your experience with the group.
4. Have you ever seen what looked like someone believing the Gospel, only for them to quickly burn out and walk away? Share your experience with the group.
5. Have you ever seen someone slowly lose their love for Jesus because they began to love the things of the world? Share your experience with the group.
6. How can the church better equip you to share the Gospel with others?

Takeaways:

1. Jesus went proclaiming the kingdom with “the twelve” and some other disciples, including three women.
2. Jesus told the parable of the sower which explains how different kinds of people respond to hearing the Gospel.