

PRIORITIES

Introduction

Stop the camera. If a soil inspector came today to inspect the soils in your life, what would they find?

Jesus used this parable to explain why some people show the results of a healthy, balanced spiritual life and some do not. In this Bible study, you will have a chance to check your priorities and see if you can improve them.

Now, listen to the parable. Then, move into groups of 4 to share your responses.

1. As you listened to the description of the four soils in the Scripture, what was your first impression?
 - This sounds like an article from *Better Homes and Gardens*.
 - Oh no, this is going to be a boring Bible study.
 - What is Jesus trying to say?
 - I wonder which soil I am.
2. Who is the “green thumb” in your family? How are you at making things grow?
3. How are you at finishing what you start?
4. In the period of your life when your spiritual life was the most unfruitful, what was the main reason?
 - I had a whole lot of problems.
 - I didn't know about Christ.
 - I knew about Christ, but my priorities were messed up.
 - I lacked a supportive Christian community.
 - I was living life *my way*.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

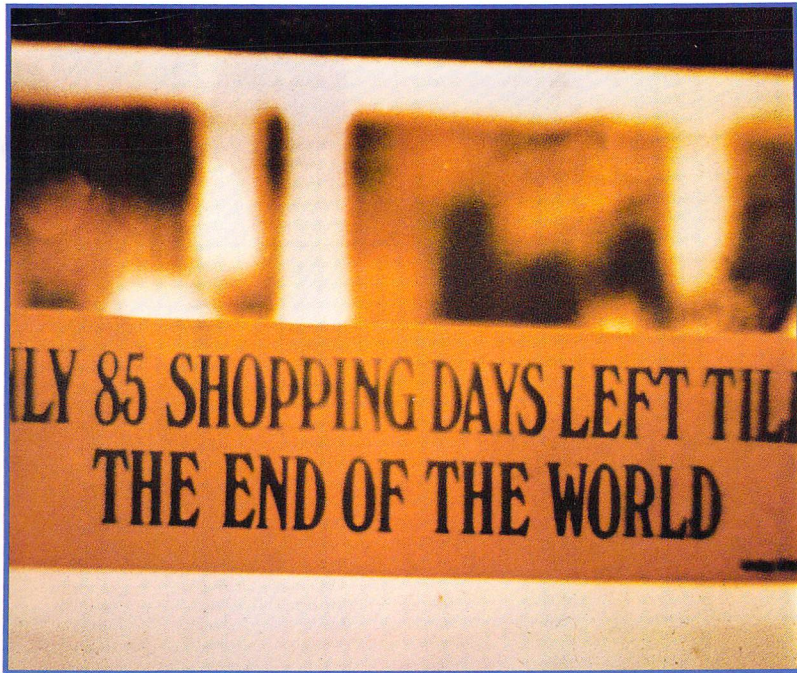
⁴While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: ⁵“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. ⁸Still 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, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” ...

¹¹“This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. ¹²Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. ¹⁴The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. ¹⁵But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

Luke 8:4–8,11–15

5. What was the main factor at the time your life produced the best crop?
 - I continually sought God's will.
 - I had my priorities in order.
 - I had few distractions in my life.
 - I had a supportive Christian community.
 - I had a strong devotional life.



6. What do you have in your life now that gives “depth to your soil” and nurtures your growth? (Choose as many as apply, and put a star by the one that is most important to you.)
- Christian parents / spouse
 - other Christian relatives
 - group Bible study
 - personal devotions
 - Christian friends
 - Christian music
 - regular worship
 - some books I've read
 - church activities
 - other: _____
7. What are the “thorns” and “rocks” in your life which tend to choke out your spiritual growth? (Choose as many as apply.)
- pressure from friends or family
 - influence of TV / movies / music
 - concern about money
 - lack of commitment or discipline
 - a “rocky” home life
 - suffering that makes it hard to believe in a good God
 - desire for material things
 - sexual temptations
 - parties / alcohol / drugs
 - worry about the future
8. How would you describe the root system of your spiritual life right now?
- pretty shallow
 - growing
 - strong and deep
 - really dry
9. How often do you make hearing and acting on God's Word a priority in your life?
- all of the time
 - most of the time
 - some of the time
 - Sorry you asked!
10. What specific “thorn of worry” would you like the group to pray with you about?