

GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

Analysis of a Crop Failure

Mark 4:1–20



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Jesus was the master teacher. Against relentless and hostile opposition, and in spite of many who followed Him for all the wrong reasons, He spoke with wisdom and taught with skill. Among the methods He preferred to use, the parable was one of His favorites. By placing a familiar and simple word picture before His audience, Jesus was able to draw out profound analogies that have intrigued even the brightest minds for centuries. In this message, we'll look at His first parable, one that carries with it remarkable relevance to this very day. We shall see ourselves in one of the types of soil Jesus talked about, and only you can know for sure which soil you are in. Let us here, then, heed His counsel.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. A Few Words about the Setting (Mark 4:1–2)

Jesus and the Crowd

Teaching and the Parables

2. A Close Look at the Parable (Mark 4:3–9)

The Sower — Unnamed

The Seed — Same Kind, No Variety

The Soil — Variety Is Introduced

- Wayside
- Rocky
- Thorny
- Fertile



Quotable

*The harvest
depends on the soil.
The results of truth
heard depend on
the condition of
your heart.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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3. An Accurate Interpretation of the Story (Mark 4:10–20)

Initial Conversation (4:10–13)

Jesus' disciples were curious; what should they have made of His story?

Understandable Explanation (4:14–20)

The Sower—Those Who Declare God's Truth

The Seed—The Truth Of God; God's Word

The Soil

- *Wayside (4:4)*
The wayside soil represents **unresponsive** people. The birds, which represent our adversary, the Devil, snatch the Word from these people, and they are never impacted by the truth.
- *Rocky (4:5–6)*
Rocky soil represents **impulsive** people. These people have learned the language of Christianity without the truth ever taking root in their lives.
- *Thorny (4:7)*
Thorny soil represents **preoccupied** people. Worry sucks their emotions and steals their joy. Preoccupation with financial status steals their heart. And these people become lured by worldly things.
- *Fertile (4:8)*
Fertile soil represents **productive** people. Their hearts are right with God and receptive to His truth, no matter the circumstance.



A CLOSER LOOK

Reading Parables

Parables are unique and almost exclusively consigned to the New Testament. They are “short stories” that depict real life and, by way of analogy, are designed to teach specific spiritual truths, usually related to God's kingdom. Parables have four basic purposes: to reveal new truth to the believing person or people (revelational); to conceal truth from the unbelieving person or people (judgmental); to provoke a decision from the undecided person or people (persuasive); and to stir up the memory of the truth through the telling of concrete stories (perpetuative).

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When it comes to interpreting parables, five guidelines apply:

1. Uncover the historical and cultural setting.
2. Discover the problem being addressed in relation to God's kingdom.
3. Uncover the central truth or its major points of comparison.
4. Relate the details of the supporting scenery to the central truth.
5. State the intended appeal or application.



LET'S LIVE IT

Please consider two abiding principles from this message.

- First, literally, in the farmer's field, the quality of the harvest is dependent on the quality of the soil.
- Second, spiritually speaking, the result of truth always depends on the condition of your heart.

So what's the response? Evaluate the condition of the spiritual condition of your heart.

If your heart is thorny, confess your condition to God. Then, repent, and begin to pull out the thorns by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Which soil are you? What are you going to do about your soil?



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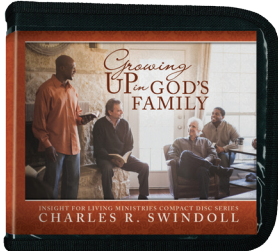
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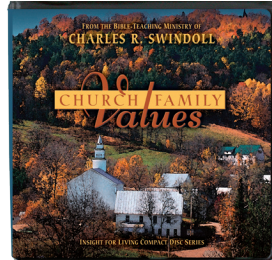
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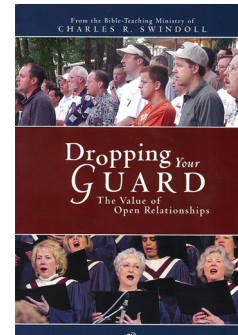
Tools for Digging Deeper



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