

FAITH: LIVING IN PRODUCTIVITY

Mark 4:1-20

Open with Praise Time: *“Living the Word”* – For what family members who are struggling for strength yet trusting in God, or new family members, or leadership, or church friends do you want to give praise to God?

Scripture: Mark 4:1-20

The Bottom Line: A living faith that endures is one that produces fruit.

LESSON PLAN



denotes Apply:



Connect: an opportunity for people to immediately interact and connect with each other; icebreaker/attention getters.

Ask: What is your favorite fruit? What’s the strangest fruit you’ve ever seen or eaten?

Transition: There seems to be a correlation between enduring faith and productivity within our faith. Let’s see what we can learn about the fruit that strengthens faith.

Read Mark 4:1-9

Jesus has had a busy day. He’s healed the blind, dumb demoniac and the accusations of being in league with Satan by the holy men. He has ignored the pleas of his mother and brothers who were trying to get Him out of town. At this point of the day He is teaching in parables to crowds.)

1. How large is this crowd that Jesus is teaching?
2. What is unique about the very first word out of Jesus’ mouth? Why do you think He was so emphatic?



Jesus has to get our attention if we are to learn from Him. What are some of the things that keep us from hearing Jesus?



How can you who are listening help others see the need and make the commitment?

3. What are the various soil types that Jesus speaks about in this story?
4. What happened to the seed the farmer sowed on each of these soils?

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*Each soil used by Jesus represents a condition of the human heart. The **hard path** is impenetrable. Whatever falls on it just lays there waiting to be kicked or carried away. This heart is hardened and no truth will break through. The **shallow soil** lies among the rocks. The lack of moisture causes the root system to be weak and it doesn't take much to pull them up or to simply blow away. This is the heart that has some hope but doesn't give much effort. The **Thorny soil** is so full of weeds that it will be choked out. This heart surrounds itself with poor influence. The **good soil** is a heart that is longing to grow and flourish.*

5. How does Jesus conclude His story?



How can you have good hearing, listen to a great story and not hear it at all? How do you think that happens within Jesus' church today?



Do you think Jesus may have seemed a little sarcastic with that statement? (yes)

Read Mark 4:10-12

1. Who were those on the outside?
2. Why did Jesus' say He spoke to those on the outside in parables?

Notice Jesus is quoting 6:9-10 written about the Jewish unbelief 700 years before the birth of Christ. We shouldn't be surprised that many Jews did not believe Jesus was the Messiah then and many still do not today. However, there are great numbers of Messianic Jewish churches around the world. Some do hear with their ears and believe. It is interesting that plain teaching does not work on many. Jesus began His ministry by quoting the promise of Isaiah that the Messiah would come to set the prisoners free and give sight to the blind. He rolled up the scroll and told them that He was the fulfillment and they were seeing truth come from God before their very eyes. They did not take that clear presentation seriously. Jesus moves to plan B just as Isaiah said He would. He begins to teach in stories, parables that would explain truth to those who were actually looking for truth.



Interactive Teaching Ideas: (Break into groups and have each table discuss this question then list the answers on the board.) - What kind of a story could you create at your table to explain why some people will understand truth and grow in faith and others will not? Create a modern day story to share at each table.

Read Mark 4:12-20

1. Did Jesus pull a punch with the Apostles and the other believers about not understanding the parable?

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What are some teachings of Jesus that you missed in the past and then one day the light came on and you suddenly realized how clear the teaching really was?

2. Let's lay out the list and the answers as Jesus explains it.

- *Seed* =
- *Seed on path* =
- *Seed on Rocky places* =
- *Seed among thorns* =
- *Seed on good soil* =



What warnings and encouragements do you need to hear in this parable? What warnings and encouragements do you need to share with family and friends?



On a scale of 1 (severe drought) to 10 (rich black soil), how would you rate your heart, the soil in which the word of God produces richly or dies?

**CARING TIME: SHARE AND PRAY**

Share the bottom line: Discuss which parts of the fruit of the Spirit have helped your ministry to others. Which parts do you need to surrender to more? Pray for one another at the table.