

# JESUS CHANGES EVERYTHING

## Jesus Teaches

Mark 4:1-9

**THE POINT:**  
*Obeying Jesus' teachings leads to productive living.*

### THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

The Bible gets a lot of respect in America—at least superficial respect. Eighty percent of adults consider the Bible a holy book, but few read it. Even among Christians, only 11 percent read the Bible daily, and 34 percent rarely read it. Many of us pay lip service to the Bible but miss out on the joy and abundant life that comes from applying its truth to our lives.

► **What's the best way for you to learn something new?**

### INTRO

Teachers are very influential, and our lives are impacted in huge ways by our teachers. Many of us even get into a particular field because of the inspiration and encouragement of a teacher. Jesus was characterized by all these. He was certainly an expert about matters of faith. Jesus was passionate about His Father's will, and He loved those He taught more than we can imagine. Plus, He had a way of making the ideas come alive to the listener. And more than any teacher who ever lived, Jesus' teaching was life-changing! When we devote ourselves to living according to what He has taught, we can experience a life of true peace, joy, and fulfillment.

### MARK 4:1-2a

Jesus was creative in His approach to teaching people, and one tool was the parable. When we study any of Jesus' parables, keep three things in mind:

- A parable refers to a real-life scenario familiar to Jesus' audience.
- A parable is for the purpose of instruction, not entertainment.
- A parable teaches one truth, not many truths.

Everything Jesus meant for us to understand from the parables is right in front of us. Sometimes it can require a little work to get to the truth, but the hardest thing to learn may be what the truth reveals about ourselves. The true test of spiritual understanding is what we do with the truth. Today, Jesus desires that we would open our hearts to His teaching, and that we would then live according to what we learn.

► **What are the benefits and challenges of using stories to reveal truth?**

### MARK 4:2b-7

The seed commonly fell on these types of soil:

- **Hard Soil:** Seeds that fall on the hard-packed path can't penetrate the soil and are eaten by birds. Similarly, God's truth doesn't penetrate hardened hearts and never takes root.
- **Rocky Soil:** Some soil looks rich, but is actually a thin layer over bedrock. Seeds take root, but the roots don't grow deep and the plant dies. Many people hear the gospel and respond well initially, but when trouble comes, they quickly fall away.
- **Thorny Soil:** Some seeds take root and begin to grow, but weeds also grow, stealing nutrients and choking the plant. Many people receive God's Word but allow weeds of sin to remain in their lives, and eventually the gospel is choked out.

► **Where do you see each of these soils represented in our culture?**

### MARK 4:8-9

Finally, Jesus teaches that some seed will fall onto "good ground." Soil that is soft, deep, and free of strangling weeds. In describing this ground, Jesus doesn't look to the soil itself, but to the harvest. To this point, the listeners were tracking right along with Jesus, but since, on their best days, they harvested about ten times the seed they had sown, this 100-times analogy probably baffled them. The truth is that when God's Word takes hold of a person's life, it produces fruit far beyond what we would imagine. In this parable, the seed represents the gospel, and if God's Word has taken root in our hearts, we will be about the business of scattering seed wildly, knowing that every time we present the gospel, there's a chance it will take root in a receptive heart.

► **What kinds of "fruit" should be evident in our lives when we obey Jesus' teaching?**



# LIVE IT OUT

## ▶ CHRIST

Jesus wants us to continually cultivate the soil of our hearts, so that we would grow in our fruitfulness and grow in our relationship with Him. What practices will you commit to this week in order to enrich the soil of your heart?

Weed <i>(rooting out sin)</i>	Water <i>(strengthening good habits)</i>	Seed <i>(spreading the truth)</i>

## ▶ COMMUNITY

Scattering seed is a responsibility Jesus has clearly called His church to fulfill (Matt. 28:19-20). Discuss with your group ways you can be good farmers, scattering seed among those who may not know Jesus so that God's Word may take root in their lives.

▶ **What specifically will you do this week to spread the gospel?**

## ▶ CULTURE

Some of us live in rural communities where Jesus' parable of the soil makes a lot of sense. Others live in cities and may have never even seen a real live plant (only joking). The point is this—Jesus, the Great Teacher, taught in such a way to relate to His audience.

▶ **List a few ideas about how you can share the gospel in your specific cultural context:**



## BIBLE READING PLAN



**DAY 1**  
MARK 4:1-20

**DAY 2**  
MARK 4:21-41

**DAY 3**  
MARK 5:1-20

**DAY 4**  
MARK 5:21-43

**DAY 5**  
MARK 6:1-13

**DAY 6**  
MARK 6:14-29

**DAY 7**  
MARK 6:30-56