

How Does Your Garden Grow?

By Susan Vogt



Fall is harvest time and there are many biblical stories about harvesting crops. But harvest stories are not just for farmers. The Parable of the Sower is a story about weeds and thorns in our heart. Do you understand how to get rid of them?

For

Adult / Couple

Season

Fall

Needed

A Bible, a pen and paper, and some time to think

Prepare in Advance

Just bring an open mind and heart.

Activity Plan

1. Quiet your mind and offer a prayer, something like this:

God of growth and the harvest, I come to you today to try to learn what gets in the way of me hearing, understanding, and acting on your Word. Amen.

2. Slowly read the Parable of the Sower, Mark 4:1-20 (see last page). If you are doing this activity with your spouse, perhaps you'd like to read it out loud, alternating paragraphs.
3. Sit quietly with this story for a few minutes to let it sink in and then respond in writing to as many of the following questions that speak to you.
 - Do you have a regular time that you read or listen to the Word of God? Of course this happens at Church if you're not daydreaming, and it's happening now because you've chosen this activity, but what about other times? Would you like to read scripture more regularly? What's stopping you?
 - God also speaks to us through inspirational books, the news, our family members, and nature. When do you most easily recognize God speaking to you? What would help you be more attentive?
 - Think about what is the rocky ground in your life. Often believers get real excited about following Jesus after a retreat, a spiritual talk, or a crisis, but then get busy, lazy, or angry at the Church

and let their devotion and prayer time slide. What structure might help you plant your faith roots more deeply and consistently?

- What “thorns” choke or crowd God’s presence out of your life? What “cares of the world” distract you from spending time in prayer? (Note: some “cares” are legitimate responsibilities, but there might be a too consuming job, over concern about making and keeping money, or time-consuming recreation that is over the top.
- What part of your spiritual life is working well? It’s good to take stock of our weaknesses, but this is not just a time to “rag on yourself” and feel inadequate. Be grateful for the times you’ve been able to recognize God’s presence and listen and act on God’s Word – even if it was risky or difficult. What are your successes? Give thanks.
- Do you like to read parables and try to understand what’s behind the literal words, or do you prefer for God to speak in plain, factual language? You can have your preferences, but we can’t control how God will come and visit with us. Keep alert.

Parable of the Sower

Mark 4:1-20

Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that "they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven."

And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

