The Parable of the Sower Luke 8

The Parable of the sower, is a very familiar portion of scripture. It can be very tempting to think to yourself, "I’ve heard this story, hundreds of times before, and there is nothing new here for me." Because we think that we know this story so well, we can close our ears to what the Lord wants to say to us. In fact, that is the point of the parable.  
  
Right after Jesus told the parable, verse 8 tells us that Jesus called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." It is also very revealing that right after Jesus told his disciples the meaning of the parable, he says in verse 18, "Therefore, consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him." How we listen and respond to God, as he speaks to us, will determine the amount of growth and spiritual fruit we will have. Another way to say it is this, the condition of your heart will determine what God’s Word can do in your life.  
  
For the longest time, I thought that this parable was all about how someone responds to the saving message of the gospel. This story is not just about hearing the salvation message. God’s Word comes to us many times, and the condition of our heart will determine what happens to that Word. At any time, our heart can take on one of the four characteristics Jesus talks about in this parable. Because life is hard and unfair, we can respond to life from a carnal mind-set and become, hard hearted. When other people attack you, malign you, abuse you, gossip about you, slander you, or hurt you, the natural response is to protect yourself. You will either rise up and lash back, recoil and put up a wall to shield yourself from continued attack or you will run in order to escape. Whether you rise up, recoil or run, you will have a tendency to hold on to the hurt and play back in your mind the scenes of attack and hear over and over again the hurtful words that were spoken. As you harbor those images and words, if you do not allow God to bring you healing and help, you can become hardened by bitterness. Through unforgiveness and resentment, you can become so hard that your heart is unresponsive to God’s Word and your life never changes.  
  
Another condition of the heart can be like the stony ground. Here the Word comes to the person but it does not have a lasting impact for there is no root that goes deep into their heart. This is the person that comes to church looking for an emotional lift. They hear the Word of God and they accept it with joy, but they don’t do anything more with it after they leave the sanctuary. Jesus says, "They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away."(v.13) So many times I talk to people who are struggling with a decision or situations in their life and they complain that their faith seems dry. They say that church is no longer meeting their needs and they feel empty. Every time I ask the same question, "Are you reading your Bible?" Not once, have I ever had someone answer "Yes." If you are only fed or expect to be fed only on Sunday mornings, you will stare spiritually. You cannot feed your sinful nature six days a week and expect to hear from God and receive all you need from a 35 minute sermon. You might feel emotionally uplifted for awhile because God’s Word is good every time you hear it, but you cannot live without getting rooted. You cannot have only head knowledge and emotional lifts, you must have a heart that is fertile and deep. Not shallow and rocky under the surface.  
  
The third type of heart is the thorny heart. "The 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."(v. 14) This kind of heart is distracted and anxious. Instead of having their mind and heart devoted to pleasing God and pursuing righteousness, they are divided. Remember that Satan’s battle cry is, "Divide and conquer." A divided mind and heart will always prevent God’s Word from producing a bumper crop in your life. You need to ask yourself, "What is it that I’m really living for? Am I living for myself or for God? Am I in control or is God? Will I strive to meet my own needs or will I let God take control? Do I really trust God or my credit cards when trouble comes?" If our focus is on worldly wisdom, earthy pleasures and personal ambitions, then our heart is full of thorns and we will allow God’s word to be choked out.  
  
The fourth kind of heart is the noble and good heart. "But 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."(V.15) The person with a good heart, hears the word, applies it to their life and then receives a harvest of spiritual fruit. The heart that is like good soil is fertile ground for God to use. God wants to see His Word produce fruit in our lives. God wants to produce change and he desires to make your life fruitful and Christlike, but it all depends on the condition of your heart. Every time God’s Word comes to you, either in church, through reading, on the radio or TV, in prayer or by some other means, as scripture reaches you, the condition of your heart will dictate how you will respond. Since God wants us to have a heart that is good soil for him to use, how can we cultivate a ready, rich heart of soil? In other words, how can we have a good heart for God to plant His Word in?  
  
  
PLOW  
  
  
The first thing to do in getting our heart ready, is to turn it over. How? Repent of any known sin. It is no mistake that the word repent means, "to turn." Repentance means to turn away from sin and pursue righteousness. To repent means that you make a 180 degree change in your direction. You don’t say that you are sorry and you will try to do better, you confess that you have sinned and you need God’s forgiveness and grace. In order to cultivate a heart that is noble and good, you need to plow up your heart and mind and turn control over to God. Ask God to break up the hard rocky surface of your heart and turn over the bitterness and unforgiveness that has made you unproductive and useless in the past.  
  
PREPARE  
  
  
  
The second step is to fertilize the soil. Spend time in God’s Word so that the life-giving truth of scripture can soak deep into your heart. Meditate, as God told Joshua to do in

[Joshua 1:8](http://www.sermoncentral.com/bible/NIV/Joshua-1.asp?passage=Joshua%201%3A8&ScrptureHover=sermon-37949-How)

[8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.](http://www.sermoncentral.com/bible/NIV/Joshua-1.asp?passage=Joshua%201%3A8&ScrptureHover=sermon-37949-How)

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Meditate day and night so that the truth will saturate past your mind and flow into your heart. Allow the Bible to fill your heart and mind so that it permeates your thoughts and conversations. As you do this, you are literally washing away the negative, deadly ingredients that result in doubt, fear and defeat and they are replaced with faith, confidence and victory. It is just like washing soap from a milk jug. The only way to get all the soap out, is to allow fresh water to run continuously into the top until the soap is gone. Meditating on scripture is just like that.  
  
PLANT  
  
The third step is to sow God’s Word into the situations of your life. We are commanded to not be hearers only of God’s Word, but a doer as well. If we want a harvest to take place, we must apply the truth of the Bible into our lives and do what it says. Remember, we will receive that which we have sown.

[Galatians 6:7-9](http://www.sermoncentral.com/bible/NIV/Galatians-6.asp?passage=Galatians%206%3A7-9&ScrptureHover=sermon-37949-How)

[7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.](http://www.sermoncentral.com/bible/NIV/Galatians-6.asp?passage=Galatians%206%3A7-9&ScrptureHover=sermon-37949-How)

[8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.](http://www.sermoncentral.com/bible/NIV/Galatians-6.asp?passage=Galatians%206%3A7-9&ScrptureHover=sermon-37949-How)

[9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.](http://www.sermoncentral.com/bible/NIV/Galatians-6.asp?passage=Galatians%206%3A7-9&ScrptureHover=sermon-37949-How)

Apply God’s Word to the things you face everyday. Look for what the Bible says about your situation and then follow the principals of scripture. In other words, put your faith into practice and live what scripture teaches. Don’t just say you believe it, live it. I love what Paul Harvey said, "If you don’t live it, you don’t believe it."  
  
PROTECT  
  
The fourth step is to weed the garden of your heart. Guard your heart from the thorns of anxiety, worry and the cares of the world. As Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all other things will be added unto you." Don’t allow weeds of evil to grow, but remove them from your heart and life. Be careful what you watch, listen to and read. Protect your heart and your relationship with God. Keep the standard of holiness and purity always before you. With your eyes on God and your trust in Him, live to please and love him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.  
  
If we will plow, prepare, plant and protect our hearts, we will be ready soil that is good for God to use. And with good soil that is daily cultivated and ready to receive His Word, a harvest will be produced.