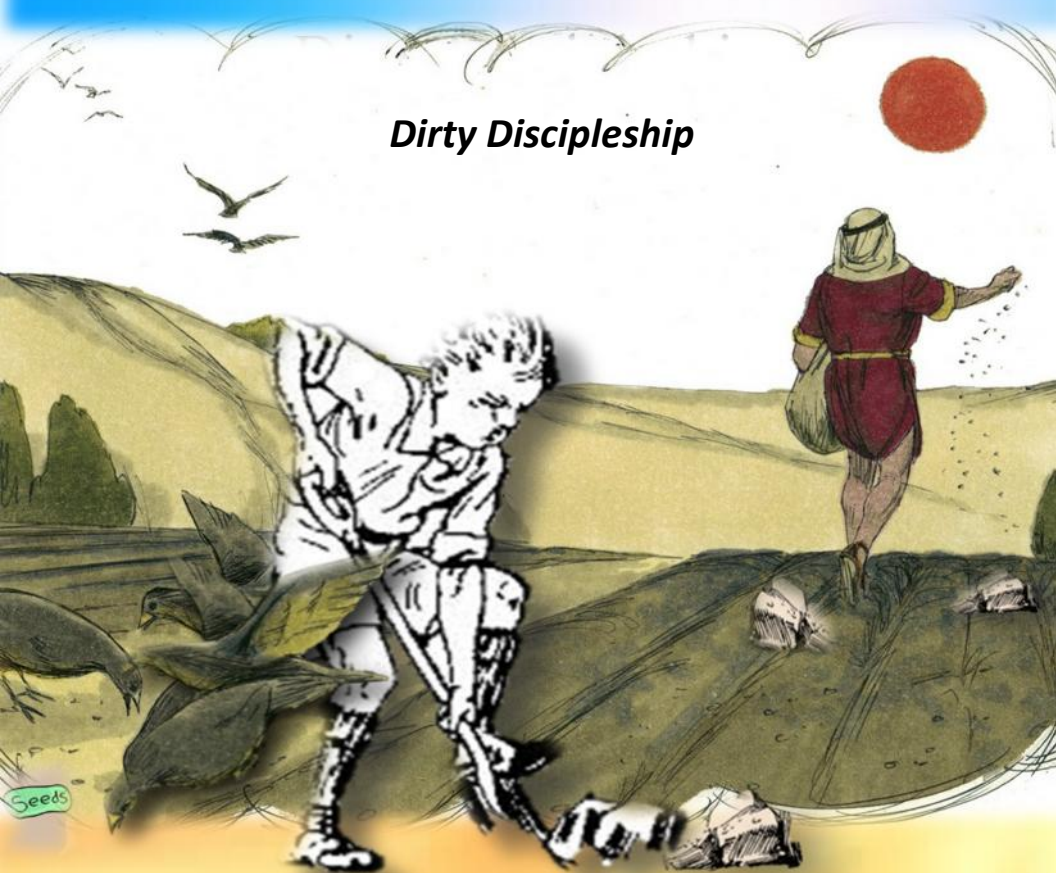


Dirty Discipleship



*Preparing the soil of the Human heart
to receive the Seed of God's Holy word.*

From Matthew chapter 13

*Christ E Free Church Pulpit Series
May-June 2014
Missions Conference*

Jesus Christ,
Our Highest Calling
Our Greatest Purpose
Our Soul's Source and Joy and our
Our All-Consuming Passion

“The motto of every missionary, whether preacher, printer, or schoolmaster, ought to be *“Devoted for life.”*”

-Adoniram Judson

Adoniram Judson was a true disciple maker. Referred to as “the apostle of Love to Burma”, he left for the mission field in 1813 and did not return to the states for 33 years, and only then as a necessity for the health of he and his wife. Upon her death, he returned to His beloved Burma.

It was in Burma, now Myanmar, that he endured a life-long battle in the 108-degree heat with cholera, malaria, dysentery, and unknown miseries that would take two of Judson’s wives and seven of his 13 children, and colleague after colleague in death. He also spent 17 months in prison, after being taken captive as a spy.

So many times, Judson was near death, yet seemed to outlive nearly everyone close to him. It is said that some of his last utterances were: *“How few there are who die so hard.”*

April 12, 1850 Adoniram Judson died and was buried at sea. At the end of his life it is said of his faithful, sacrificial efforts: *“The Bible was done. The dictionary was done. Hundreds of converts were leading the church”*. And today there are close to 3,700 congregations of Baptists in Myanmar who trace their origin to this man’s labors of love.”

* Information and quotes taken from John Piper, *Adoniram Judson, How Few There Are Who Die So Hard*, Copyright © by Desiring God.Article).

Adoniram Judson was a rare example of living, sacrificing and dying for the love of God and the love for the people and mission to which he had been called. He was a true disciple maker.

Table of Contents

Introduction, p6

Preparing the Soil, p7	Matthew 13:3-23	May 18, 2014
------------------------	-----------------	--------------

Hardened Soil, p19	Matthew 13:3-23	May 25, 2014
--------------------	-----------------	--------------

Rocky Soil, p32	Matthew 13:3-9; 18-23	June 1, 2014
-----------------	-----------------------	--------------

Thorny Soil, p46	Matthew 13:3-9; 18-23	June 8, 2014
------------------	-----------------------	--------------

Productive Soil, p55	Matthew 13:3-9; 18-23	June 15, 2014
----------------------	-----------------------	---------------

Risk of Living with the World, p68	<i>parable of wheat and tares</i> Mat.13:24-30 // 36-43	June 22, 2014
------------------------------------	--	---------------

Resources, p83

INTRODUCTION

There are many reasons why some Christians do not disciple. For those who do, there are countless excuses presented, as to why they seem satisfied with being “*faithful*”, though they admittedly are not “*fruitful*”.

Missions has always been a matter of dirty discipleship. Missions necessitates person-to-person, life-on-life engagement. Also from Scripture, missions has not been either foreign or domestic focused. Acts 1:8 tells us that we are to be witnesses and make disciples in every area, location and relationship in which we connect with others. Jesus did not delineate between foreign and domestic. What He did tell us is that the *home* mission field is the path through which we will reach the *foreign* field. Or to put it differently, as we reach the world around us, we will eventually reach around the world.

Dirty Discipleship is not so much focused on the soil being good soil, but on the sower being a good sower. After all, this is the parable of the *sower*. The main focus of this parable is doing what it takes in order to help the seed be most productive. That is of utmost importance, that is, the seed being productive. And while we might attempt to do what we do and “leave the results in the Lord’s hands”, this is ultimately the responsibility of each sower as we partner together with God Himself.

Wherever there is a lost soul, there is a need for a missionary. And wherever there are excuses for not making disciples, there is the need for one to look back to the path of Jesus Himself, who engaged His culture, loved the sinner, and called others to follow Him, before He even invited them to believe in Him.

I would like to encourage you to consider the commandment of Jesus to make disciples, then evaluate your own obedience and fruitfulness in that great calling. What you end up doing to attempt to bring your own life into alignment with Jesus’ holy challenge to follow Him and His holy commandment to make disciples, may just deeply impact the kingdom of God for Christ.

So accept the challenge, take the plunge and give yourself to the goal of fruitfully, making an eternal impact for Christ.

“Dirty Discipleship: *Preparing the Soil*”

Text: Matthew 13:3-23

May 18, 2014

*And he told them many things in parables, saying:
“A sower went out to sow. -- Matthew 13:3*

*The thing about sowing, you cut corners here and you
regret it once harvest time comes.*

- a lazy farmer

READ Matthews 28:18-20

INTRODUCTION

Dirty Discipleship is doing what it takes to prepare the Soil of the human heart, for the seed of God’s Holy Word. It means ***Passing the Faith Along*** and making disciples which means preparing the soil, which means doing what it takes to help other become disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Soils: Mat.13; Mark 4, Lk.8

Key: _____

QUESTIONS WE WILL ATTEMPT TO ANSWER:

- 1) What is The purpose of the parable?
- 2) What is the purpose of the seed?
- 3) What is the purpose of the soil?
- 4) What is the purpose of the sower?
- 5) What is the state of the soil and why?

- 6) How can we prepare the soil to be more receptive to the seed?
- 7) What is the relationship between faithfulness and fruitfulness?
- 8) What is the key to understanding this parable?
- 9) What will I do, as a result of what I learn?

Learning about the parable means learning how we can prepare the soil of a person's heart so they might be more receptive to the seed of God's Holy Word. This is totally dependent upon the Divine working of God's Holy Spirit, while obediently fulfilling our role as His instrument, vessel and/or tools of His trade.

Study: *What is a Person to Believe?*

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PARABLE?

* This parable teaches us something about God and how God wants things to work. In Matthew ch. 13, Jesus teaches 8 parables.

"Explain
to us the
parable..."

The first 4 being; the parable of the sower, followed by the parable of good seed and bad seed, then the parable of the mustard seed, and then the parable of the leaven. There are 4 more to go, but before Jesus can go any further, His disciples come to him and ask Him to explain to them the 2nd parable (v36), which was the parable of the good and bad seed. Jesus says, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man" (v37).

So the Sower of the good seed in parable #2, is the Son of Man, but the Sower in parable #1, which is our focus for this month is not Jesus, but in fact intended to point to you and I.

Mat 13:3-9 ESV And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. (4) And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. (5) Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, (6) but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. (7) Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. (8) Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (9) He who has ears, let him hear."

This presents an important disciple making teaching mechanism. This is NOT the parable of the soil. This purpose is NOT intended to teach whether or not a person is saved or lost or whether or not they can or cannot lose their salvation. This is the parable of the *Sower*.

“hear the parable of the *Sower*”. (Mat:13:18)

The purpose of the parable of the *sower*, is to help listeners and readers understand what God expects in regard to obedient, productive, fruitful and faithful disciple making.

Go and make Disciples! (Mat.28:18ff) This parable teaches how to do that productively.

Mat 28:18-20 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) Go therefore and *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Make a *disciple* means making a *learner*. Therefore up front, if someone is expected to be learning, then that means someone has to be teaching. That is why Jesus instructs His followers to be actively “*baptizing...and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...*” (Mat 28:19-20)

3 Components of Discipleship

1) Discipleship involves Pre-Evangelism -

Mat 28:18-19a And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) Go therefore and *make disciples* of all nations,

The command here is not to *GO*, but to *MAKE* disciples or learners of all people of Jesus. This is the process of building a foundation of Truth upon which they might eventually savingly believe. When that actually takes place in a person’s spirit, is most often undetectable, but to God.

Joh 2:11 This beginning of the signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him;

When Jesus turned the water into wine, the *disciples* who were already His *disciples* - having personally heard his teachings and observed His life and ministry – *believed*.

2) Discipleship involves EVANGELISM

Discipleship provides a foundation for faith. Therefore discipleship must involve sharing the gospel at some point.

Mat 28:19-20 (19) Go therefore and *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ...

“Baptizing” indicating adequate learning, accurate knowledge and coming to true saving faith resulting in salvation, occurs.

3) Discipleship involves traditional DISCIPLESHIP -

Mat 28:19-20 (19) Go therefore and *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Teaching - or what we might consider as traditional discipleship is important. Discipleship is not necessarily in a classroom. It is not specifically in lecture format, but from person-to-person contact and life-on-life relational connections and interaction. As Jesus was with His disciples in the open air, as they were walking together, He possibly pauses and referring to something they all were seeing together, He says, “You see that farmer? A Sower went out to sow....”, and *so* we have this parable.

The parable from the reader’s perspective

- A Parody or mockery

“He did
What?”

This parable would not spark a theological debate re: the state of the soil. On the contrary the response would most likely be more like, “What is up with this Sower?” What does this guy think he’s doing?” “He did what? What a joke!”

The Problem with the parable

The Sower is Careless and irresponsible, with the attitude, “Well,

at least I'm being faithful." In this parable, there is an embarrassing disconnect between the sower, the seed and the soil.

The Resolution - What does the parable need?

The parable needs to be evaluated in light of the discipleship responsibility of every obedient Christian. How am I doing in my own obedience to Jesus expectations of making disciples? Am I obediently making disciples? Am I effectively connecting with others, in order to connect them to Christ?

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE SEED? (Mat. 13

* How would you answer that question? Of course we all know the answer to that.

A: The purpose of the seed is to grow & bear fruit

Mat 13:8 Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

This is the preferred outcome. Growth. Productivity and Fruitfulness. Seed, reproducing after their kind, just like God instructed in the Garden of Eden.

What is the Problem with the seed?

A: – the soil is not prepared for the seed, because the sower is not paying attention.

The problems are that there is hard packed down soil, so all that seed never gets below the surface and ultimately is gobbled up by the birds before it begins to grow. *It never had a chance.*

Secondly, the problem is that there are rocks preventing depth of root and the seed *withers right up* by the scorching sun. There was no root or depth, meaning there was no reliable source of water and nutrients essential for life.

And finally, there are thorns choking the life *right out of the seed*, just as it begins growing, preventing growth, choking its life and making it unproductive. Overall, it's a bad situation for the seed and a scenario that makes the sower look pretty incompetent.

Resolution - What is The Need of the seed?

The need of the seed, is to have the hard soil plowed up; to have the rocky soil de-rocked; and to have the thorny soil, de-thorned. The seed needs the soil prepared, so the seed can have a chance to grow and bear fruit, and do what it was meant to do.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE SOIL?

The purpose of the soil is to receive the seed and allow it to become fruitful. Soil is intended to be a fertile resting place for the seed to begin to come to life.

What is the Problem with the soil?

The soil is hard, rocky and filled with thorns – all of which are hindrances for the seed to do what the seed is supposed to do –that is, growing and bearing fruit.

What is the need of the soil?

The need the soil is Resolution. There is need for the hard soil to be broken up, for the rocky soil – for the rocks to be removed and for the weeds and thorns to be pulled out, allowing the seed to do what the seed is supposed to be doing, which is growing and bearing fruit.

NOW WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE SOWER?

If the sower knew this answer, we would not have this parable.

His purpose is to caringly, responsibly sow the seed and care for it. He needs to be interested in the outcome of his work. There is need for a little quality control. Someone needs to be willing to be less worried in how far he can fling the seed, and more concerned in whether or not he is doing a decent job.

Problem -What is The Problem of the Sower?

He is not paying attention and is carelessly and irresponsibly sowing the seed. He is disconnected, in that he is technically scattering the seed, but he is not attentive or interested in doing his job productively or as is expected of him.

“I’m being faithful.” It is not acceptable to be fruitless in our work for Christ. The Sower seems to be going through the motions, rather than being focused on being productive. As Christians, we must never be satisfied with that!

$\frac{3}{4}$ of his seed is wasted. $\frac{3}{4}$ of his time and effort is wasted. $\frac{3}{4}$ of what he does is a total loss. Now, let’s bring this work ethic home to us today.

Illustration

Can you imagine a business like Channellocks, and discovering that $\frac{3}{4}$ of all their hand tools are defective. Can you imagine milking your cows and selling your milk, knowing that $\frac{3}{4}$ of your milk is spoiled and soured. Can you imagine a company where $\frac{3}{4}$ of their customers are dissatisfied. Can you imagine a school where $\frac{3}{4}$ of their students flunk out.

You don’t have to think about that very long until you realize, this is simply not acceptable work or behavior or ministry or life. And yet, sometimes when it comes to ministry, we excuse ourselves with failure.

Resolution - What is the need of the sower?

The Sower needs to Wake up. The Sower needs someone who cares enough to approach him/her and call their attention to his wasteful, careless, and irresponsible work. He is faithful, but he is not fruitful.

We might be tempted to accept, or excuse the efforts of the sower, until we put it into a more modern context.

Q: So What is the relationship between faithfulness and fruitfulness?

Matthew 25:14 and following we have the parable of the talents. We are told that a man goes on a long journey. But before he leaves, he gives 3 servants Talents (not skills but sums of money). Later he returns and calls his servants to give account for how they used the money he gave them while he was gone.

Take note:

Those who were fruitful, were COMMENDED for being faithful.

Mat 25:20-21 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' (21) His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

On what basis was this servant declared faithful? On the basis of his/her fruitfulness.

Mat. 25:22-23 And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' (23) His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

On what basis was this servant declared Faithful? On the basis of his/her fruitfulness.

And from the same chapter Those who were fruitless , were CONDEMNED for being faithless and lazy and wicked.

Mat 25:24-27 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, (25) so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' (26) But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? (27) Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.

The one who was fruitful was **COMMENDED** for his faithfulness.

The one who was fruitless, was **CONDEMNED** for his faithlessness.

Listen to Jesus' words to His Sowers.

Joh 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot **bear fruit** by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me..

Joh 15:8 By this my Father is glorified, that you **bear much fruit** and so prove to be my disciples.

Joh 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and **appointed** you that you should go and **bear fruit** and that your **fruit** should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you

And Here is our lesson as Sowers:

**The sower is only considered fruitful,
as the seed which he has sown is fruitful.**

Just to clarify here –

Mat 13:18 ESV "Hear then the parable of the *sower*:

This parable is less about the soil being good soil, than it is about sowers being good and responsible and faithful and fruitful and commendable sowers.

At least in this parable - **We** are not the soil. We are the sowers. This is not the parable on the soil, but the parable of the **Sower**. The primary emphasis seem not on who is growing and who isn't or who is in danger of losing their salvation, or what things are in our lives that keep us from growing spiritually. Those lessons are obviously there, but they are secondary lessons. If this was the parable of the soils, then the primary emphasis would be on the state of the soil of our own heart.

But the parable is the parable of the **SOWER**.

Therefore the focus and primary emphasis is on the sower. This is about how fruitful or fruitless we are as servants of Christ.

Ultimately
we are not
called to be
"faithful"
but to be
fruitful!

And So As Disciples:

...We are effective disciple makers, and fruitful disciples, only to the degree of the fruit that others are bearing, to whom we are ministering.

So this does not prove us to be fruitful disciples of Jesus, if we are growing strong in our faith. We ARE however, proven to be fruit bearing disciples **IF** those to whom we are ministering to and reaching out to, are themselves bearing fruit in their faith and are growing and becoming followers of Jesus, through our disciple making efforts.

Jesus tells this parable, it seems, to open a window of understanding to His true disciples, of the weighty kingdom expectation and responsibility which He is placing upon them. We are expected to be fruitfully making disciples of Jesus Christ and we are expected not just to be faithful, but to be fruitful.

How can We Prepare the soil in order for it to be more receptive to the seed and fruit bearing?

The reality is a lesson on sharing Biblical truth and making disciples. This will be the focus of our next few lessons. The parable is an illustration

As disciple of Jesus ourselves, we are called to be **connecting with others, in order to connect them to Christ, and to other Christ followers, the church**. That is Life-on-Life involvement and Person-to-Person interaction, with personal contacts and relational connections. This is Biblical discipleship!

That means it is important to be nurturing Personal contacts to develop into relational connections. Relational connections become opportunities to speak God's truth and share His gospel message with the lost, spiritually dead, living earthly residents of hell, while they remain on this earth.

This is why each of us are encouraged, if not urged to participate in your own Person Mission Project through the month of May.

Dirty Discipleship- that is the answer. Dirty discipleship is person to person, life on life, making personal contacts that turn into relational connections, so that we spend time and take the effort to actually begin being used by God to work the hardened soil of those around us by showing God's love through our actions and

attitudes. And as we are interacting with others, we are sharing Gods' message of salvation through faith in Christ.

This is Holy Spirit empowered ministry. Serving obediently and trusting God's Holy Spirit to do His part in and through us.

If you are thinking, “but I don't have time to disciple anyone? I'm too busy. My schedule is too full”. Then you still don't understand Biblical discipleship. True discipleship is not performed in a classroom. True Biblical discipleship is person to person and life on life, connecting with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the church. This happens in everyday living and connecting with others. This happens at work, at school, at the ball game, - wherever you go, whatever you do, where you meet other people. Always prepared and praying for a kingdom moment, to talk about your faith in Christ.

This is not another appointment you make to give someone a lecture and then a quiz on scripture. This is talking with others, sharing with others, listening to others, understanding where they are coming from and if they are hardened – understanding WHY are they so hardened? How did they become hardened to Christ? What might it take and how might God use you to talk to them, share with them, listen to them in order to understand their story, where they are coming from and How they have become a hardened soil?

PERSONAL MISSIONS PROJECTS - Praying that God would show you and use you to break up that fallow ground, and prepare the soil of that person's heart in order to be receptive to the seed of God's word and message of the gospel of Christ. The **Key** here is in Mat.13:19

Mat 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not *understand* it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

Connecting means sharing and listening. What do they think? What do they believe? Do they *understand* who Christ is and what HE did? Do they *understand* the message of the gospel?

What can we do – how can we help them understand life changing truth? Connecting, and taking time, person to person and life on life. Personal interaction is key for Biblical Dirty Discipleship to effectively take place.

Dirty Discipleship does not mean doing more and cramming more into your schedule. We are already connecting with people - every day. What it does mean is that we do what we are already doing, but with a redirected focus and purpose - that is to connect with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the church.

RECITE TOGETHER

Dirty Discipleship means doing what it takes to prepare the Soil of the human heart, to be more receptive to the seed of God's Holy Word.

-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

Q: Why is it called, "Dirty Discipleship"? _____

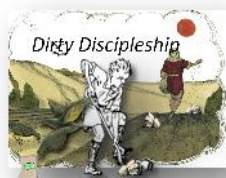
Q: What is the difference between being faithful and being fruitful? _____

Q: What was the key given by Jesus to the soil being unproductive or productive? _____

-----*Praying It Through*-----

Dear God, dear God – please do not allow me to continue in unfruitful ministry. Fill me with your power and Spirit, for Your kingdom work.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen!*



“The Hardened Soil”

Text: Matthew 13:3-23

May 25, 2014

And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them . --Matthew 13:4

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

--Francis of Assisi

REVIEW

I. We defined Dirty Discipleship

Dirty Discipleship means doing what it takes to prepare the Soil of the human heart, for the seed of God’s Holy Word.

II. We attempted to answer several questions:

- 1) What is The purpose of the parable?
- 2) What is the purpose of the seed?
- 3) What is the purpose of the soil?

4) What is the purpose of the sower?

5) What is the relationship between faithfulness and fruitfulness?

III. Clarifications:

1) We clarified the fact that we are effective disciple makers, and fruitful disciples, only to the degree of the fruit that others are bearing, to whom we are ministering.

2) **Sharing the gospel:** I'm not saying that we only share the gospel with those with whom we have long term relationships. My philosophy is, whenever you feel the HS of God may be prompting you to share your faith and the gospel message with another person, that is the time to do it. The fear of whether or not a person is offended or receptive to your message is ultimately, irrelevant. If God is moving you to do it, you are to do it.

On the other hand, I am advocating that a genuine disciple of Jesus, ought to be doing what it takes, to help others remove the hindrances to faith when and if we are able. I am also advocating sharing the message of Christ, whenever, and wherever you have the opportunity.

3) The heart of the parable of the Talents. Mat.25. Notice what is not stated in this parable. One man was given 5 talents, the other two, the other, 1 talent. The man who was given 2 was not scolded for not having as much as the one who had 5. They aren't compared.

More importantly, the man who received 1 talent, and only gave back one talent, is not scolded because he wasn't able to give his master what he wanted. He was condemned because he did not try.

We don't see the 3rd servant investing, working, praying, and doing what he thought it would take in order to get a return on his masters investment, only to be beaten by the depressed economy, low interests or a bear market. We simply see him doing **nothing** and thinking that was enough.

Likewise with the sower in Mat. 13. We don't see the picture of a sower who after being hired, is warned to be sure he is fruitful and productive in his endeavors. He is not instructed by anyone to be sure he first does what it takes to prepare the soils by plowing the

hard ground, removing the rocks, or pulling up the weeds and thorns.

We are only given a parable, with Jesus' interpretation. I believe the interpretation itself, is intended to be enough to cause the readers to get the message: that is, God deserves our best and connecting with others on a deeper level is the only way to genuinely make disciples – not the only way of sharing the gospel, but of *making disciples*.

Study: *What is a Person to Believe?*

INTRODUCTION

Dirty discipleship is person-to-person and life-on-life connection and interaction.

Aim: We are to be engaged with our mission field.

2 Questions:

- 1) What is the state of the soil and why?
- 2) How can we prepare the soil of another person's heart, to be more receptive to the seed of God's Holy Word?

THE HARDED SOIL (Mat.13:18-19)

Hard soil may look receptive to seed, but is not. It may be deceptively appearing as though there is nothing hindering it from being productive, therefore, no effort is taken to ensure the seed finds a fertile resting place.

Likewise, in sharing God's Word, one may think he/she is doing a fine job. *I am doing what I was hired or called to do.*

Mat 13:18-19 "Hear then the parable of the sower: (19) When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not *understand* it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

The Fact of Truth: (v19a)

The fact of Truth is that these are those who are reached with Truth. These are not unreached people. This path way could represent those who have heard the message of the gospel over and over, and have rejected it over and over. This could be part of what the hardened ground may represent. IT could even represent The United States of America – a culture of people who, for the most part, have heard the gospel message for generations, and the more that message goes out, and the more that message is rejected, - the more the culture as a whole becomes somewhat resilient and hardened to its message.

v.19) “*When anyone hears the word of the kingdom...*”

The seed is sown on this ground. The fact is, they hear the word of the Kingdom.

The seed sown along the pathway and “the man who hears the word of the kingdom” are identified . The seed in the heart is not of itself responsible, but the man who lets the devil snatch it away. (Robertson)

As Jesus tells this parable, it seems, to open a window of understanding to His true disciples, of the weighty kingdom expectation and responsibility which He is placing upon them. We are expected to be making disciples of Jesus Christ and we are expected not just to be faithful, but to be *fruitful*.

Now look at....

The Problem with the Human heart (v19)

(19) When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and **does not understand** it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

Did you catch what is wrong with the heart?

The all important Key: They did not “**Understand**”. Highlight it. Underline it. Circle it. Never miss this key point again!

Illustration

I spent much of the Summer of 1988, back packing through Europe and with two of my buddies from Bible School, Jeff and Bob. We

joked with Bob because Bob could overcome any language barrier with sheer volume, or so we joked. Whether in Brussels, Munich, Sarajevo or Istanbul, Bob seemed to be able to get his message across in any language, just by yelling a little louder.

But no matter how much we repeat the message, or how loud we turn up the volume – that's not necessarily what helps people understand our message of the gospel. Because the problem is not in their hearing, but in failing to understand. *And whose fault might that be?*

THE PROBLEM WITH THE SOWER / DISCIPLE MAKER (v19c)

We often seek the easiest way, rather than the most effective way, or the most productive way.

"This is what was sown along the path". (v19c)

The Easy Route is not the most productive

The path being the easiest way in which to cover the territory. While this may be the easiest and maybe even the quickest route, it is not necessarily the most productive route. It is the path that everyone tends to travel and it actually ends up avoiding the good soil.

In Matthew 13, an interesting point is made. Jesus tells this parable about people not understanding the message of the Kingdom. Then the Disciples have to confess that they themselves, did not understand the lesson that Jesus just taught.

Mat 13:10-18 Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" (11) And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. (12) For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (13) This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. (14) Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

"You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." (15) For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' (16) But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. (17) For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. (18) "Hear then the parable of the sower:

The easiest way is not necessarily the most productive way.

Therefore Jesus has to explain to them the meaning of the Truth he had just told them. This presents an example of this very parable. People don't understand truth. Someone has to take time and put forth the effort to connect, interact and quite possibly instruct Truth so it may be understood, so it can be believed.

The most productive route is through dirty discipleship, that is getting connected, interacting with and getting our hands dirty in the soil of the human heart.

Question: What can cause a hard heart?

1) Rejection of Truth [Read Romans 1:18]

Exo 9:7 And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

Exo 9:12 But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

Pharaoh hardened his own heart by rejecting God's will and going his own way. And yet, is that not the state of everyone before they come to Christ? They are guilty of rejecting God for a time and going their own way until they are truly saved and converted?

So even a person with a hardened heart can be redeemed – the hard soil of a hard heart can be prepared for the seed of God's word.

2) Disappointment with God

Some do not understand the way God works or what they are to make of their own life circumstances, much less the state of the world and our culture. Life doesn't seem fair. God is often blamed, rather than the sinfulness of mankind considered.

3) Disillusionment with Religion / "Christianity".

Repeated offenses between people can harden hearts toward both parties. Some people have been hurt by the church, or other individual Christians and as a result, are disillusioned with Christianity in general and hardened to our message and our methods.

4) Discouragement and overall Hopelessness

Discouragement in general and an overall sense of hopelessness of life – lack of purpose – can't make sense of much of anything – especially the pain and the loss. Some attempt to keep a positive attitude in the face of negative circumstances, but the reality of life has crushed their attempts to look for better things.

5) Specifically Pride can harden the heart.

Dan 5:20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him.

6) Sin in general

Heb 3:13-16 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (14) For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. (15) As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." (16) For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?

Sin in general, or disobedience toward God's Truth and rejection of His ways, can contribute to a hardened or calloused heart toward God's Word.

7) Hurt feelings of various kinds

Anger, abuse, injustice, unresolved conflict, unforgiveness, jealousy, feelings of betrayal, manipulation, victimization, inconsideration, , Insults; any or all of these elements can contribute to a hardened heart. These hard hearts are in need of others who will help them work through rocks of offenses and thorny hindrances to faith.

Yet remember, the key issue as to why this heart is hardened is due to **lack of understanding** ^[Mat.13:19] of the seed or the word of God, which is the message of the kingdom.

THE SOLUTION FOR SAVING THE SEED AND ENHANCING UNDERSTANDING.

* The parable is an illustration. The reality is a lesson on sharing Biblical truth and making disciples. Connecting, involvement, interacting and teaching are needed areas of connection between the true disciple and the one needing to be disciplined.

As disciples of Jesus ourselves, we are called to be **connecting with others, in order to connect them to Christ, and to other Christ followers, the church**. That is Life-on-Life involvement and Person-to-Person interaction.

That means – when we have the opportunity - it is important to understand that Relational connections can become opportunities to speak God's truth and share His gospel message with the lost, spiritually dead, living earthly residents of hell, while they remain alive on this earth. It can provide opportunities to be used by God to loosen the hard soil, removing some rocks of offense and thorns of hindrance to their faith.

Dirty Discipleship is part of the answer. Dirty discipleship is person-to-person, life-on-life, making personal contacts that turn into relational connections, so that we spend time and take the effort to actually begin being used by God to work the hardened soil of those around us.

Rather than being quick to speak and careless in sowing the seed, as disciples we need to be sensitive to the needs of others, listening to the experiences of others, patient with the mistakes of others and

understanding of the things that have brought people to where they are today.

For those who understand God's truth and the gospel and reject it – that is on them. They will be held accountable. But failing to share the Truth and the gospel in a manner in which others can hear and understand, may be our own responsibility which we will be held accountable for.

Some may be thinking: “ but I don't have time to disciple anyone? I'm too busy to get my hands dirty in someone else's life”.

“My schedule is already too full”

“I can't cram one more thing into my day” .

If you are thinking that, then you still don't understand Biblical discipleship. True Biblical discipleship is not performed in a classroom. True Biblical discipleship is person-to-person and life-on-life, **connecting with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the church**. This happens in everyday living and

connecting with others. This happens at work, at school, at the ball game, - wherever you go, whatever you do, whoever you meet. Always prepared and praying for a kingdom moment, to talk about your faith in Christ and pass your faith along and teach some of God's holy Word.

This is not another appointment you make to give someone a lecture. This is talking with others at work; sharing with others during lunch; listening to others as they begin to come to you, sharing their problems and asking for prayer or your advice. Its about understanding where they are coming from and how they have become so hardened. It means taking time to interact and in doing so, determining whether or not they understanding the Truth which has been sown.

WHY are they so hardened? How did they become hardened to Christ? What might it take and how might God use you to talk to them and share with them? listen to them in order to understand

No time for
discipleship?
Then you
are still
unclear on
the concept!

their story, where they are coming from and How they have become a hardened soil?

PERSONAL MISSIONS PROJECTS –

- 1)** Praying for those around us who are lost. That should be 100% participation from the church.
- 2)** Praying and looking for opportunities to engage in conversation with those who are lost, whom we have been praying for. Asking God to provide kingdom moments and help us to recognize and respond to those kingdom moments.
- 3)** Praying that God would place on your mind some act of loving service to demonstrate God's love to one of those for whom you have been praying. God can use you to break up that hardened, fallow ground of another human heart, breaking down the barriers and being used of the Holy Spirit of God, to prepare the soil of that person's heart in order to be more receptive to the seed of God's word and message of the gospel of Christ.
- 4)** Recognizing and responding to the opportunities God provides and sharing your faith in Christ and His life promising message of the gospel.

God puts us where we are for a purpose. He allows our lives to connect with others for a purpose.

There are some people, perhaps many people, and a good chance, MOST people who need more than just another sermon preached to them. There are those who have been genuinely walked on by the church and offended by other Christians. There are those who have been knocked down and stomped on by life's circumstances and robbed of hope. There are those who need a genuine example of Jesus Christ to demonstrate Gods' love to them, in order to soften the hardened ground that is keeping them from truly listening, understanding with their heart and believing in Jesus.

Discipleship is a spiritual battle. Satan does not want people to understand God's Truth or the gospel. Satan does want you frustrated over the process and to remain unfruitful.

Mat 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, *the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.* This is what was sown along the path.

Connecting means sharing and listening. What do they think? What do they believe? Do they understand who Christ is and what HE did? Do they understand the message of the gospel?

What can *I* do? How can *I* help them understand life changing truth? We need to be connecting, and taking time to engage in, person-to-person and life-on-life connection.

Dirty Discipleship does not mean doing more and cramming more into your schedule. We are already connecting with people - every day. What it does mean is that we do what we are already doing, but with a redirected focus and purpose - that is to connect with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the church.

Remember

Dirty Discipleship means doing what it takes to prepare the Soil of the human heart, for the seed of God's Holy Word. Pray for your ***Personal Missions Projects*** – to be helping other to soften hearts and understand and believe. Every Christian has a responsibility before God for the mission field where He has placed you.

HOW CAN WE PREPARE THE HUMAN HEART?

1) Listen. Listen to their story. The Bible instructs us to be quick to listen and slow to speak.^[James1:19] Let others talk without criticizing their choices or condemning their lifestyle. Show them you are genuinely concerned in their situation and interested in them as a person. This is very difficult for most Christians. We either want to tell them why they are wrong, or turn the conversation to ourselves so they can hear our story.

2) Learn. Learn about their beliefs, values and experiences. Christians must learn to care enough to listen. We must listen in order to learn about them and their background and how we might begin to help. We need to take mental notes. What particularly difficult event have they endured? What have they communicated

that reveals an understanding of the Bible, a possible faith in Jesus or an opinion on spiritual matters. Or have they shared something that might be an obstacle or hindrance to their faith? Perhaps they may reveal a perspective or outlook on life that could help understand where they are coming from. All these things are crucial to uncover.

3) Self-Evaluation. Have I proved to this person that I really care? Have I effectively demonstrated God's love? Was there a need that was expressed that I could possibly help with? Or is there something specific I could pray for or ask to pray for?

In order to prepare the soil of the human heart to be more receptive to the seed of God's holy Word, we need to know some of what is lying below the surface. Understanding their journey to the person they are now, may reveal a wealth of information that can help us to begin to prepare the soil.

The question is: How interested am I, in the lives of others? And am I willing to do what it takes to genuinely make disciples, even though it may prove to be frustrating and personally costly?

-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

Q: Think of the people you are presently discipling. What do you think might be some of the things that are hindrances to faith in Christ? _____

Q: Perhaps you are realizing that you really aren't involved in a disciple making relationship. Maybe you weren't disciple by anyone. Begin to look at the people God has brought into your life; people at work, neighbors, or other areas of your social life. What is it going to take for you to begin to be obedient to God's Great Commission for you to begin making disciples for Jesus? _____

** Write down the names of people you have regular opportunities to help disciple within a given week. Where are you connecting with these people? How much time are you able to spend preparing the soil of the hearts of people around you?

Q: Is there someone specific who is contributing to your life in a discipleship setting or relationship?

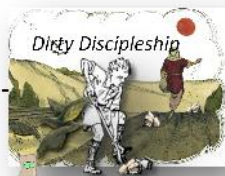
-----*Praying It Through*-----

** Spend a little time praying for the people God has brought into your life. Ask God to give you a heart of compassion for them and a spirit of wisdom and discernment in being led by the Holy Spirit to speak at the right time.

Ask God to open their minds to understand and their hearts to believe and grow in their faith.

Dear Father, I want to become obedient to the Great Commission. I don't really know how and am pretty intimidated by the whole concept. Please give me courage to begin helping others to become genuine followers of Jesus.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen!*



“Preparing the Rocky Soil ”

Text: Matthew 13:3-9; 18-23

June 1, 2014

Title: “A Rock Road, A Heavy Load”

[Mat.13; Mark 4, Lk.8]

[READ Mat. 28:18ff]

Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, (6) but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.

-- Matthew 13:5-6

“Aim at the ground, you'll never miss.”

— Kristine Thomas

May Missions Conference Focus: **PASSING THE FAITH ALONG**

REVIEW

I. We defined Dirty Discipleship: Dirty Discipleship

means doing what it takes to prepare the Soil of the heart, for the seed of God's Word..

II. We attempted to consider how we can view the hard soil and consider how we might begin to be used by God to be the kind of sowers that are fruitful in His kingdom work.

III. We saw that this parable is not so much about the soil being good soil, but about the sower being a good sower.

REVIEW

The Hardend Soil (Mat.13:18-19)

(19) When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and **does not understand** it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

This kind of heart is considered hardened because, though he heard the word of the Kingdom, he **did not understand** it. As a result the Evil one stole the word of God away.

Some may be thinking: “ but I don’t have time to disciple anyone? I’m too busy to get my hands dirty in someone else’s life”.

”My schedule is already too full”

”I can’t cram one more thing into my day” .

If you are thinking that, then you still don’t understand Biblical discipleship. True Biblical discipleship is not performed in a classroom. True Biblical discipleship is person-to-person and life-on-life, **connecting with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the church**. This happens in everyday living and connecting with others. This happens at work, at school, at the ball game, - wherever you go, whatever you do, whoever you meet. Always prepared and praying for a kingdom moment, to talk about your faith in Christ.

This is not another appointment you make to give someone a lecture. This involves connecting with others at work listening to their story; sharing with others during lunch; listening to others as they begin to come to you, sharing their problems and asking for prayer or your advice. Its about understanding where they are coming from and how they have become so hardened. Taking time to interact and in doing so, determining whether or not they understanding the Truth which has been sown.

The most
important
KEY
to becoming
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His Word.

Dirty Discipleship does not mean doing more and cramming more into your schedule. We are already connecting with people - every day. What it does mean is that we do what we are already doing, but with a redirected focus and purpose - that is to connect with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the church.

PERSONAL MISSIONS PROJECTS –

1) Praying for those around us who are lost. That should be 100% participation from the church.

2) Praying and looking for opportunities to engage in conversation with those who are lost, whom we have been praying for. Asking God to provide kingdom moments and help us to recognize and respond to those kingdom moments.

3) Praying that God would place on your mind some act of loving service to demonstrate God's love to one of those you have been praying for. God can use you to break up that hardened, fallow ground of another human heart, breaking down the barriers and being used of the Holy Spirit of God, to prepare the soil of that person's heart in order to be more receptive to the seed of God's word and message of the gospel of Christ.

4) Praying and moving toward responding to the opportunities to share your faith and the message of the good news with someone who God brings into your path.

ROCKY SOIL AND SPIRITUAL JOY (v.20)

* Here the text highlights the importance of **UNDERSTANDING**.

PARABLE: Mat 13:5-6 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, (6) but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.

INTERPRETATION: Mat 13:20-21 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, (21) yet he has no root in himself, but endures

for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

*I would like to suggest that each of these soils or levels of spiritual receptivity are what they are, due to varying levels of understanding or *lack* of understanding of God's Truth.

(19) When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

Not that everyone who is taught just the right lesson, using just the right scripture text, and speaking just the right words will understand and believe. But their inability to believe is based on their inability to understand.

There are those – many – who will hear and understand and may even believe – yet choose to reject God's Truth and His sacrifice for the payment of their sins. Or they will hear the gospel and perhaps believe it as true, only to reject Christ personally and continue living as they are.

This person receives the message with joy. She likes the message of God's love, or the promise of a real spiritual church family. He/she may be attracted to the prospect of a home in heaven with God and escaping the judgment for sin. But there is a deeper need.

The Need of a Teacher: Lack of understanding

So in v.20 the person hears the message, it sounds good and he receives it with joy. Then in v.21 we are told that he has no root in himself, but endures for a while. Then v.21 continues to describe what every Christian life includes – that is trouble in the form of tribulation and some persecution. And as a result of trouble, he falls away.

What is the need in the life of the person who has read *or heard* the word of the Kingdom? They need someone to make it clear to him/her and to help him/her **UNDERSTAND**.

Unbelievers need a teacher! There is no way out of it.

Mat 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Act 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Discipleship is a ministry of helping others understand the gospel and the Christian life.

2Tim. 2:1-2 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, (2) and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Teaching is a necessary element in true discipleship. Dirty discipleship is connecting in a way that enables the disciple maker to enter into the person's life, ensure they understand the Truth of God's word in general, but also the truth of the gospel specifically, so they can believe and be saved.

The Examples of Jesus

Jesus connected with others and helped them understand in order to truly believe.

Jesus and the woman caught in Adultery

Joh 8:9-18 But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. (10) Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" (11) She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

It was short, but Jesus engaged the sinner and her condemners. He asked questions. He listened. He lovingly interacted and was full of grace and truth. ^[Jn.1:14]

Jesus and the woman at the well

Joh 4:13-29 (13) Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (15) The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water," so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." (16) Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." (17) The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; (18) for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

[Read John 4:7-29 for the full story.]

She needed to be taught Truth. He could have stopped when the woman states, "Sir, give me this water." But he doesn't. Instead he continues engaging her in conversation to help her understand who he is and why it is, that she so desperately needs a Savior like Jesus.

Philip and the Eunuch on the road to Jerusalem.

Act 8:29-31 And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." (30) So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" (31) And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

The Eunuch had heard – he was reading, but could not understand. He needed Philip to teach him and thank God Philip was willing to do just that. *This is what dirty discipleship is all about.*

Jesus and Nicodemus and being born again

Joh 3:9-16 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" (10) Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and **YET YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND** these things? (11) Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. (12) If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? (13) No one has ascended

into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. (14) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, (15) that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. (16) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Nicodemus was a spiritual leader and knowledgeable of holy Scripture, and yet was himself, in need of being taught the way of Truth. Making disciples means connecting with others in a way that helps them understand the gospel, so they can get connected to Jesus and to His followers, the church.

ROCKY SOIL: A LIFE OF TROUBLES (Mat.13:20-21

Rocks are tough. They are obstacles and hindrances to faith, life and even a meaningful and satisfying life.

PARABLE: Mat 13:5-6 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, (6) but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.

INTERPRETATION: Mat 13:20-21 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, (21) yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately *he falls away*.

What causes this falling away? Troubles and disillusionment with what they had understood the message, yet misunderstanding the true meaning of the *word of the Kingdom*.

Troubles Galore (v21

* In this life, there will be troubles. Christianity doesn't promise escaping life's trials. People must be made aware of that and taught to expect them.

(19) When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and *does not understand* it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

I believe this first portion, reveals the behind the scenes goings-on that may be overlooked. I believe this reveals to us the ultimate

Becoming a Christian is like drawing a
bulls eye
on your chest for the enemy to see.

problem and challenges of the soils or hearts in this parable.

SPIRITUAL BATTLE: The bottom line is that the Devil wants to stop all that God wants to start. He wants to destroy all God wants to build. He wants to steal and kill all that God wants to bring to life.

Joh 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

This parable reflects a spiritual battle. The forces in the battle are most clearly presented in the hard soil – that is, “*the evil one comes and snatches away.*” (Mat.13:19) That is the goal of the evil one.

In the second soil the Evil one is just as active, but here we see, not so much of the Evil one himself, but the tools which he uses. Situations, circumstances, relationships, difficulties, hardships, expectations, trials, persecution...

Joy in the basics; pain in the long haul

Hebrews 6:1-3 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, (2) and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. (3) And this we will do if God permits.

The basics of Christian faith is Gods purpose, man’s sin and coming judgment, Gods love and sacrifice for sins through Christ

and the coming resurrection of the dead. These are basics. We typically share the basics with people and many will enjoy hearing the good news of God's love and forgiveness and the escape of hell and punishment of sins. That is a joyful message. Yet, sometimes we are guilty for attempting to make the message sound better than it is, so the unbeliever will want to believe it.

Look at it this way: We tell the person, God has a wonderful plan for your life. And God does, but as believers, we are focusing on the end result, rather than on the process. The unbeliever hears, "God has a plan for your wonderful life", but they are focusing more on the process, rather than on the end result. So the process for them is being full of blessings, good things, a better and more enjoyable life.

As a result, as Ray Comfort puts it, they experience troubles in the Christian life, the promise of a wonderful life really doesn't pan out for them. They end up falling away from the truth they had been taught and they become another unbeliever, inoculated against the Christian faith.

It is important that we understand how others are understanding or misunderstanding the message we are giving. We must be able to clarify and help them understand more clearly, the realities of the Christian faith and life.

But teaching must continue to more meaty topics. What about **Lk.10:3**, where Jesus says to his disciples, that he is sending them out as lambs in the midst of wolves? What about in **Mk.10:36** when Jesus says there will come a time when a man's enemies will be those of his own family. What about **Rev.6:9**, which refers to those who suffered and were slain for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

What about **2 Tim. 3:12**, where it is promised that all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. These are things of the Christian faith that must be taught and young believers must be helped to prepare for. Making life-on-life connections and taking time to teach them can help them understand more accurately and endure in their faith.

Heb 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food,

In Mat. 4:10, we read of John the Baptist is beheaded for his faith.

In 2 Cor.4:8-10 Paul describes his own suffering as being afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; (10) always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies

In Heb. 11:36 Many faithful believers who suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. (37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated-- (38) of whom the world was not worthy--wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

To make the Good News exaggerated into being better and more pleasant than it really is, is to do no one any favors. There is certainly joy in our relationship with Christ, and in His promises for eternity, but pain is promised as a certainty for the true and obedient disciple of Jesus Christ.

Christianity
does not
promise
escape from
the troubles
of life.

It seems the greater joy of our salvation would stem only from a more truthful understanding of our sinfulness before a Holy God and our own hopelessness, apart from the loving Grace of God who in order to demonstrate His love for us, sent His own Son to die for our own sins, in our own place. In helping others to understand Truth, we not only help closer to true salvation, but we help open the doorway to receiving true joy and peace as a gift of God's forgiveness and assurance.

OFFENSES ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO WITHER AND FALL AWAY (v.21)

Mat 13:20-21 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, (21) yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

Those Who Fall Away

* What does *Fall Away* refer to?

1Cor. 8:13 Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

Rom. 14:21 It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

John 6:61 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this?"

Matthew 26:31-33 Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'" (32) But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." (33) Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away."

Falling Away is not necessarily a reference to apostasy or losing one's salvation. It may even be more accurately referring to the process of a person coming to true saving faith. As a person first hears the news of the kingdom of God, whatever that message may be – it may sound appealing and inviting. The person may begin learning and following, while not yet fully believing. Yet after trials begin along their spiritual journey, they come to the conclusion that it "*this is not for me*" and they call it quits, thus *falling away* from the disciple-learning process, which never leads to saving faith.

The Difference "Understanding" can make

Understanding could make a big difference, if he knew of coming problems in advance and how to deal with them. Perseverance

could take place if he had another devoted disciple connected enough to walk with him/her through these things that can cause younger believers to stumble and fall in their faith.

For God's kingdom work, there is no substitute for relational connections that can provide opportunity for preparing the soil of the human heart, to be more receptive to the seed of God's holy word.

APPLICATION

Connecting to others, Life-on-Life and Person-to-Person to help them understand more clearly and remove rocks of hindrances and stones of offense, can help to prepare the soil of the human heart to be more receptive to the seed of God's holy Word.

Here we review a previous application, due to the fact that this is not something we can read once, but must be reminded, and must put into practice time and time again. There is no substitute.

So...

1) We Listen to their story. In order to prepare the soil, you have know some of what is beneath the surface. We have to help others understand their journey. This is not a psychological evaluation but a person understanding of the person we are discipling.

a) what are they talking about?

b) How has it affected them?

2) We Let them talk. Allow others share without criticizing their choices or **condemning** their lifestyle. Go out of your way to show them you are genuinely interested in them as a person.

This is very difficult for most people. Most people are quick to turn the conversation to themselves. "Oh yea, well let me tell you what happened to me." Or they are quick to give advice and miss, altogether, the issue at hand or the point the person was hoping to make.

Jas 1:19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;

This is characterized by a constant desire to interrupt the person's story to interject your own ideas, thoughts or experiences.

Practice listening and allowing the other person to share.

a.) "No kidding? Then what happened?" or "Wow, how did that make you feel?"

Listen and help them tell their story. Show interest and attempt to genuinely understand their situation or experience.

b.) Learn about their beliefs. What do they believe or value? What was their experience being shared?

Take mental notes. Have they experienced a particularly difficult event? Have they communicated anything that reveals an understanding of the Bible; a possible faith in Jesus or an openness to spiritual matters?

c.) What are some beliefs they shared? – things pertaining to life, God or other people in general? Are they Biblical? Accurate?

d.) What are some values they hold dear? Fairness, compassion for the needy or honesty? Are any of these commendable?

e.) What are some experiences that have affected or helped mold the person's perspective and outlook on life? Can you identify any hindrances to faith or obstacles to understanding or believing in Jesus Christ?

People
need help!
Christians
must
become the
helpers!

3) We Evaluate, by asking, 'What have I demonstrated?'

Have I proved to this person that I really care and really understand?

Have I effectively demonstrated God's love to the person? Was there a need expressed, that I might be able to help with? Is there something specific I could pray for or could ask that I could pray for?

Connecting means sharing and listening. What do they think? What do they believe? Do they

understand who Christ is and what HE did? Do they understand the message of the gospel? Is there something I could help clarify in their life and understanding of Biblical Truth?

4) What can we do? How can we help them understand life changing truth? We have to be connecting, and taking time, person to person and life on life. We must be praying for those on our **PERSONAL MISSIONS PROJECT**.

We must be ready to share our personal faith and the message of the gospel with someone. We must be willing and available for God to use you to answer your own prayers for you family, friends, or neighbor's salvation.

-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

Q: In the parable of the Sower, what effect do rocks have on the seed? _____

Q: In the interpretation of this parable, what happens to the person, whose heart is represented by "rocks"? _____

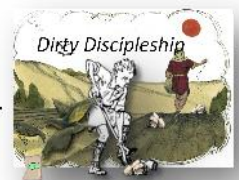
Q: What might be done, in order prepare the rocky soil of the human heart, to be more receptive to the seed of God's holy Word, so that they become true followers and true believers in Jesus?

-----*Praying It Through*-----

Dear Father,

I ask you to help me to become a helper for others to truly believe in Jesus. Open my heart to have compassion on those who are still outside your family. Use me to help others believe and be saved!

*In Jesus' name,
Amen!*



“Preparing the Thorny Soil: *Hearts Drained of Life*”

Text: Matthew 13:3-9; 18-23

June 8, 2014

[Mat.13; Mark 4, Lk.8]

[READ Mat. 28:18-20]

“Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up
and choked them.” --Matthew 13:7

If you enjoy the fragrance of a rose, you must accept
the thorns which it bears.

--Isaac Hayes

Study: *What is a Person to Believe?*

A counselor once told me, when you see a drowning person, you can only yell to them so long. Eventually you must jump into the water and come out with them.

People we hope to disciple, may be choking from life's interests and cares and we may never know it. You can't necessarily see *desires or dreams* choking the life out of a person. They can be drowning from worldliness and the only way we can know it, is to get into the water with them and then attempt to bring them out.

REVIEW

Rocky Soil are people who hear the word of the Kingdom, like what they hear and receive it. They are filled with joy for a time. But once trouble and persecution arise due to the word, they fall away. Perhaps this is due to hearing a gospel message with the focus on blessings and a better life, rather than the reality and likelihood of suffering and hardship that is promised to those believers who truly desire to live Godly lives in Christ Jesus.

We also considered the example of Jesus Himself, as He connected with people and engaged them in a manner which helped them to better understand who He was and how much He was needed. We also learned some very practical suggestions on how to be used of God to remove the rocky hindrances to faith, and to prepare the soil of the human heart, in order to be more receptive to the seed of God's holy Word.

Jer 4:3 For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

This series is about doing what we can, to break up the fallow ground.

The Seed Among the Thorns

CONSIDER THE THORNS & CARES OF THIS WORLD

*

Why the use of the word or concept of a thorn?

Mat 13:22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

A thorn is painful and it is also life robbing. In this parable, we are reminded of the sower who is "faithfully" sowing the seed, yet carelessly disconnect from his ultimate responsibility or helping the seed to grow. The reality of our lesson is that in sowing, we can actually become unconcerned with the fruitlessness of our mission. We may not like this possibility, but we must consider its reality.

These people hear the word

The problem with the thorny soil, again, is not that they failed to hear, but they failed to understand what they had heard. The seed along the pathway did not understand and as a result, $\frac{1}{4}$ of the seed was taken away by devil.

The seed on rocky ground briefly grew with joy, but after trials and difficulty of life – even persecution - $\frac{1}{4}$ of that which was sown, fell away. Then the seed among thorns is the one who hears the word, but pleasures and distractions choke the life right out of this seed and once again, $\frac{1}{4}$ of his seed also proves unfruitful.

As a result, $\frac{3}{4}$ of his seed is wasted. $\frac{3}{4}$ of his time and effort are unfruitful. And there is no indication that this is acceptable ministry!

So these people hear the word. They probably don't fully understand the Christian faith. They experience a spiritual battle, and whether they are aware of it or not they are in need of someone to help them understand. But no one does, and in the end there is no life and no room for their faith.

These people are caught up in many worldly cares

“cares of the world” can refer to worldly things that hold our interest and may be objects of our desire. The way this is used, can also refer to things that, as humans, concern us such as worries, anxieties, daily responsibilities and overwhelming or inescapable life circumstances.

v.22) “...but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word...”

“cares of the world” - the word used here is not one of specifically loving the world, or longing for things in the world”. It is a word which refers to **distractions**; time consuming, energy draining, and the general time consuming, attention distracting issues of life.

Same word used in...

1Pet 5:7 casting all your <i>anxieties</i> (or cares) on him, because he cares for you.
--

For the moment, let's consider these "worldly cares", as being physical, human concerns. This could refer to any one of us here this morning. Any believer, at any time, can be caught up in or overwhelmed by the concerns of life.

Mat 6:31-34 Therefore do not be *anxious*, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' (32) For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. (33) But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (34) "Therefore do not be *anxious* about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

At any time, anyone of us can find ourselves overwhelmed with anxiety. Doesn't mean we are pint sized Christians, it just means that as Christians, we struggle and we need one another. It doesn't mean someone is weak in faith, but possibly that they are simply overwhelmed.

Hebrews 10:23-25 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. (24) And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

This can't happen if we minimize our Christian and ministry relationships.

Mark Copeland reminds us that the cares of this world, can cause us to be unprepared for the spiritual battles ahead. What a difference we could make, if instead of pointing the finger and gossiping about others who are struggling, we invested that time and energy into productively helping those people. Prayer and personal involvement are crucial for any person in any struggle of life. What if Christians began doing what Christians are supposed to be doing – that is, praying, helping, encouraging, modeling, coming along side others, Person-to-Person and Life-on-Life, carefully and lovingly working the soil of the heart to receive the seed of the Word, when the time was right.

Luk 21:34 "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.

The devil can cause our cares and anxieties to distract us so much, that they can weaken our minds, keeping us from being focused on what is truly important and eternal. Some people are never involved in ministry for the Lord because they are always in a state of crisis and high anxiety. Not sinful things necessarily, but profoundly distracting and more often debilitating, as it pertains to kingdom work.

These cares of the world can eventually choke the word, and cause it to be unfruitful and unproductive in our lives – either from a salvation perspective of a discipleship perspective. Oh if we were only more willing to be ‘*workers of the soil*’.

THORNS AND THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES

* Riches can choke the spiritual right out of a person.

1Tim. 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain,

The context here is referring to people who are attempting to be godly in order to gain more wealth. False godliness, because godliness is not a step or a tool or a tactic for getting rich or even the “blessing” of a raise. And whether it is intended to or not, they prosperity gospel sends a message of idolatry.

“The lack of money is the root of all evil.”

—Mark Twain

Is money a necessary evil?

In *It's A Wonderful Life*, George Bailey was talking with Clarence Oddbody the angel. He asked him if he had any money? Clarence replied, “oh we don’t need any of that where I come from.” To which George Bailey replied, “well is sure comes in pretty handy down here, Bub!”

Mark Twain, stated, “*the lack of money is the root of all evil.*”

Money does come in handy for us. Jesus used it in his time. Money is not Evil. The Bible tells us, “the love of money is the root of all evil”^[1Tim.6:10]. JP Getty once stated: “My formula for success is rise early, work late, and strike oil.”

1Tim. 6:9-10 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. (10) For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

The deceitfulness of riches is that some think more money is the answer to their problems. Some are deceived into thinking that more money will reduce their worry and stress. JP Getty - “Money is a wonderful commodity to have, but the more one possesses, the more involved and complicated become his dealings and relationships with people.”

Again, Mark Copeland states that the evil in riches lay in diverting our attention away from God, and feeling self-sufficient, so as to lose God as our all-sufficient Source.

1Tim. 6:17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

That is the deceitfulness of riches. It is the source in which we trust, or else it becomes the source to which men lust.

Some are deceived into thinking that enough money will bring peace and joy and satisfaction and contentment in life. When asked by a reporter, “How much money is enough?” John D. Rockefeller responded, “Just a little bit more.”

Jesus Example with the Rich Young Ruler

Mat 19:16-22 And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" (17) And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." (18) He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus

said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, (19) Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (20) The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" (21) Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." (22) When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

All the commands were related to the others. Notice the commands Jesus does not mention; ¹⁾You shall have no other gods, or ²⁾ You shall have no idols, which is what he seems to be referring to in v.21. This again, can afflict any Christian. We can become overwhelmed with worry of the money we have or worried about the lack of money. *"When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."*(v.22)

Mat 13:22 ...but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Interesting this does not indicate the plant is dead but that it is unproductive. Even Christians can become so consumed with making money, working every bit of overtime, taking on bigger assignments with bigger pay checks, and longer hours – all adding up to less time, less relationship depth and less ministry involvement for Christ.

When will enough be enough? *Just a little more??*

APPLICATION: PREPARING THE SOIL

*

1) Who have I had opportunity to listen to this week? Was their anyone's life concerns that I was able to help relieve today? Was there someone who needed to tell their story and was I available to listen and provide caring consolation?

2) What did I demonstrate to that person? Did I show them I was interested and concerned? Did I show God's love to them? Did I share some of the hope that is in me? Did I indicate that my faith in God is stronger than my worldly anxieties?

3) What have I demonstrated? Have I proved to this person that I really care and really understand? Did I demonstrate that money is a tool, rather than a god?

4) Have I effectively demonstrated God's love to the person? Was there a need expressed, that I might be able to help with? Is there something specific I could pray for or could ask that I could pray for?

Dirty discipleship means...

Helping those who are anxious over worldly cares.

Our application is not so much what to do, but how we live or communicate with our lifestyle.

For people who are caught up in and overwhelmed by the cares of this world – filled with anxiety and worry and concerns over the issues of life – they need someone in their life, who is just farther along in the faith than they are, so that they can offer them hope and assurance of God's plan and promises. They need someone who can instruct with Biblical Truth and model a life of peace and faith? This involves life-on-life and person-to-person interaction.

You don't have to be a person with all the answers. But what you do need to be, is a person who knows there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Some people in life crisis situation can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. What they need is someone who can see the light or at least is certain that it is there and can offer hope and assurance that there is a light at the end and that you are willing to walk with them until they can see it for themselves.

Connecting with others in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers. Life-on-Life. A non-negotiable aspect of discipleship is your own personal experiences, together with your own personal Christian testimony. The world needs Godly examples of Christians facing stress-filled situations, yet with a peaceful God-trusting faith.

Helping others who are deceived with the pursuit of earthly wealth.

As disciples of our Lord Jesus, our personal testimony in the face of financial problems is important in helping others through the

same struggle. The prosperity gospel has done so much to invalidate the message of the true gospel of Christ. It is little more than Christian Idolatry. I read once that those who believe God wants you wealthy and healthy, think that people look at them and think, “their God must be great.” But in reality people look at them and think, “their God must be money.”

The world and those we may disciple, need Godly examples of Christians who are genuinely content and trusting God for their needs. When the world looks at you, what do they see? What values do they see in our lifestyle? Do our lives evidence contentment so that we are not seen as pursuing more and more money?

Does my testimony communicate that I have a peace that surpasses all understanding? This is what it takes to help others with the life choking thorns and to prepare the soil of their heart to be more receptive to God’s powerful, life changing Word.

-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

Q: Why do some people not want to get involved in Dirty Discipleship? _____

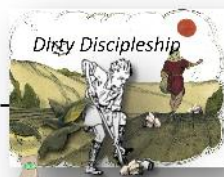
Q: What does Dirty Discipleship take? _____

-----*Praying It Through*-----

Lord, make me an instrument of peace and encouragement in the eyes of the world. Help me to be a model of what it means to be fully satisfaction and contented in Christ.

In Jesus’ name,

Amen!



“Properly Prepared and Productive Soil ”

Matthew 13:3-9; 18-23

June 15, 2014

[Mat.13; Mark 4, Lk.8]

“As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.” --Matthew 13:23

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but
by the seeds that you plant.

--Robert Louis Stevenson

Galatians 6:7-9 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

Study: *What is a Person to Believe?*

Mat 13:8 Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (9) He who has ears, let him hear."

Mat 13:23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

REVIEW

The Parable of the Sower teaches two important lessons.

#1) It communicates God's expectation for His servants to be productive and fruitful in their kingdom ministry. To fail at our responsibilities, and yet excuse ourselves by considering ourselves faithful, is not acceptable.

#2) This parable reveals the heart of God, which desires those outside His family to be brought into His family. From Holy Scripture we learn that the seed of God's Word is eternal. The soul of the human being is also *eternal*.

We have spent a month and a half getting to this point.

The Productive soil

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODUCTIVE SOIL (Mat.13:8, 23)

* This is the part of the parable where the seed does what the seed is intended to do; because the soil did what it was intended to do; because the sower did what he/she was expected to do.

The Most Important Thing

Be reminded that the focus of this parable is not so much on the soil being good soil, but in the sower being a good sower. But even with that, the sower himself is not the ultimate focus of this parable. This parable is most importantly about the seed being fruitful and what it takes for that to be accomplished.

Therefore, the focus of the story is not really about the first soil being a hardened path, but rather about the seed and that the seed being gobbled up by the birds. Likewise, the focus of the 2nd soil, is not so much that it had rocks in it, but that the seed was scorched and withered away. And likewise, the focus on the 3rd soil is not so much on the fact that thorns were in soil, but that the life of the seed was choked out. *The most important thing is what happens to the seed.*

So in the parable of the Sower, with all 3 examples of soils, the most important lesson is ultimately the outcome of the seed. *What matters most, is what happens to the seed. That is THE most important thing.*

The Productive Seed

Mat 13:8 Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (9) He who has ears, let him hear."

Remember, this is Christ's interpretation. We have 3 important aspects of this parable – each interdependent upon the other. The Sower does what He does, the soil is what it is and the seed produces as it is intended to produce – that is, more after its own kind.

So how does this happen? Why does this seed produce such a high yield in this soil?

It is soil which has been properly and responsibly prepared to be receptive to the seed. In other words, it is soil which is most receptive, in order to allow the seed to do, what the seed is intended to do- that is germinate, root deeply, develop its life source, grow into a mature plant and bear fruit. Their fruit then, will hold other seed, which will in turn, grow and bear other seed, which will grow up to bear more fruit and other seed in an ongoing continues line of productivity.

By this my Father is glorified, that you

bear much fruit

and so prove to be my disciples. --John 15:8 (ESV)

The most important focus of this parable is that the seed is able to do what the seed is intended to do – grow and bear more seed. And that can't happen, unless the soil is prepared, and that won't happen unless the Sower is fruitful in his labors.

So the role of the seed is important. The role of the soil is important and the role of the sower is important. They are

interdependent upon one another.

THE REALITY OF DIRTY DISCIPLESHIP

This is the parable of the productive sower. In the interpretation of this parable, Jesus reveals the all-important key to the parable.

God's Purpose for the seed of His Holy Word

... is to accomplish *its* intended purpose!

Is. 55 has a promise directed to Israel, yet gives us insight – I believe eternal insight into God's purpose for the church and for the world.

Isa 55:9-11 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

(10) "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, (11) so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

That is every word, in every verse in every chapter, in every book that we call the Bible. All of it is from God. All of it is inerrant. It is all Inspired by God and infused with an eternal, Holy purpose.

Rom 1:15-16 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. (16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

God's Word is not only infused with purpose, but with power to accomplish His intended purpose.

God's Purpose for the soil of the human heart

* This is KEY - to *understand* enables one to believe.

Mat 13:23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and **UNDERSTANDS** it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Remember the reason the first seed did not grow?

Mat 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does NOT understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

So the key element in the soil being prepared for the seed, in order to do its necessary work, is for the hearer to actually understand or to be helped to understand the Truth of God's word and the basics of the Christian faith.

So, God's purpose for His Word is to accomplish His purpose. God's purpose for the soil, is to understand and believe.

Therefore we come to this all important point.

God's Purpose for His appointed Sowers

God's purpose for His appointed sowers is to be fruitful in preparing the soil of a human heart, to be receptive to the seed of Gods' Holy Word, by helping others understand.

2Tim. 2:1-2 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, (2) and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

This is *PASSING THE FAITH ALONG*, which is our focus for this year. We are called to be productive and bear fruit. Therefore it is our purpose to connect with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the church. This is the ideal scenario for gardening and farming, that is to be productive. IT is also God's intended design and desire for His church to be productive.

"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." - John 15:8

We saw the parable of the productive soil.
We see the reality of dirty discipleship.

Now we consider...

THE AWARENESS OF OUR SPIRITUAL BATTLE

Birds, soil and weather are the enemies. But for the Kingdom of God, our enemy is Satan himself.

Mat 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, *the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.* This is what was sown along the path.

His tools are his demons, circumstances, troubles, other people, or any distraction of our own desires that he can manipulate. Jesus reminds us that there is a battle between heaven and hell and smack in the center of that battle are the inhabitants of this world. The intent of the Evil one is to discredit Gods Holy Word and therefore destroy His Holy Purposes; preventing others from understanding, believing and honoring God by following Christ with their lives.

The Devil's Attempts Then...

Gen. 3 and Satan deceiving Eve

Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "*Did God actually say,* 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

*** Underline the question...** *"Did God really say...?"*

**** jot down Mat.4:3 as a cross reference.**

Satan begins his deception by questioning

Satan uses manipulative questioning which attacks the weaker faith of the lesser mature believers. "Did God really say...?" "Did He really mean what He said?" "You can't believe God." "You can't take God at his Holy Word."

Satan causes doubt by bringing up questions and attacking God's integrity.

Satan convinces that God's word is not true.

Gen 3:4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die..."

What is Satan doing here? Calling God a liar and discrediting the Authority of God's Holy Word! We don't have to worry about being unkind or offending the devil. We can call it what it is. Jesus himself said Satan is the father of lies (Jn.8:44)

The Devil is stating that “Clearly, God’s word is not True.”
“Obviously you can’t take God’s word at face value.”

*The temptation of Christ (Mat.4:5
Satan begins by questioning?*

Mat 4:3-11 And the tempter came and said to him, "**If you are the Son of God**, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

(4) But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (7) Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (8) Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. (9) And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." (10) Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" (11) **Then the devil left him**, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

*** Underline the question, “If you are the Son of God...” (Mat.4:5**
Cross reference this with Genesis 3:1.

Satan counts on Christians being confused re: the authority, believability and inspiration of Holy Scripture. Is this the word of God? Is this believable? Do I have the freedom to make is say something God didn’t mean it to say?

Satan twists Scripture

Mat.4:5-6 (5) Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple (6) and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

He counts on Christians being confused re: the authority, believability and inspiration of Holy Scripture.

Did God really say? Did He really mean what He said? You’re not going to take that at face value are you?

ILL) Unfortunately some allow for and entertain these kinds of questions as valid if they are applied to the Bible, but nowhere

else. Those kinds of questions directed toward Scripture are acceptable, but in no other realm of their lives. Can you image a Christian employer, who holds to these questions being directed toward scripture, but if they are applied toward the employer herself, she would be outraged.

The employer instructs her employees, you start your work at 8:30 sharp. You work a full 8 hours. You are required to complete 20 products a day. But the employees, say, “did she really say that?” Did she really mean that?” She’s not going to care if we come in late, or only work 6 hours and only get 10 projects accomplished. She just wants to offer us a job and make us feel more secure and satisfied with life.

Or parents giving your children instruction, only to have them think, Did Dad really say that? Did Mom really mean what she said? Na-a-a-a-!.”

They’d never settle for that kind of treatment personally, but when it comes to Holy Scripture, many feel free to call into question the truth and authority of God’s word, to fit their situation or point of view. This is clearly a double standard.

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” --2Tim. 2:15

The Devil’s Attempts today...

Everyday people read the Bible and question whether or not it is believable or if God really said what the Bible has recorded. Every day religious people, take it upon themselves and invest themselves with the freedom and authority to determine what did God really say and did He really mean what He said? And every day those who are deceived, deceive others, by leading them away from the authority of God’s Holy and Inspired Word. God didn’t really mean what He said. God’s word doesn’t really mean what it seems to mean. As a result, the meaning is generalized, allegorized – it is made to be figurative or

spiritualized – anything but what God meant – anything but face value – anything but the Truth.

The Jesus Project which began with the Jesus Seminar which evaluated the sayings of Jesus. (1985-1991)

Goal

The first step in the work of the Jesus Seminar was to inventory and classify all the words attributed to Jesus in the first three centuries of the Common Era. The goal was to review each of 1500 items collected and determine which of them could be ascribed with a high degree of probability to Jesus.

The Seminar collected more than 1500 versions of about 500 items sorted into four categories:

- 1) Parables
- (2) Aphorisms (- an original thought, spoken or written in a concise and memorable form)
- 3) Dialogues
- 4) Stories containing words attributed to Jesus

Voting

After debate on each agenda item, the Jesus Project voted using colored beads to indicate the degree of authenticity of Jesus' words. Each color was assigned a number rating, so that votes could be quantified with a weighted average.

The Fellows adopted four categories:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Red (likely authentic) | 2) Pink (somewhat likely) |
| 3) Gray (somewhat unlikely) | 4) Black (unlikely) |

THE JESUS SEMINAR Fellows also came to consensus on the following:

- Jesus of Nazareth did not refer to himself as the Messiah, nor did he claim to be a divine being who descended to earth from heaven in order to die as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. These are claims that some people in the early church made about Jesus, not claims he made about himself.
- At the heart of Jesus' teaching and actions was a vision of a life under the reign of God (or, in the empire of God) in which God's generosity and goodness is regarded as the model and measure of human life; everyone is accepted as a child of God and thus liberated both from the ethnocentric confines of traditional

Judaism and from the secularizing servitude and meagerness of their lives under the rule of the empire of Rome. (That certainly strips Holy Scripture of its Authority and removes any human accountability to a holy God.)

- Jesus did not hold an apocalyptic view of the reign (or kingdom) of God—that by direct intervention God was about to bring history to an end and bring a new, perfect order of life into being. Rather, in Jesus’ teaching the reign of God is a vision of what life in this world could be, not a vision of life in a future world that would soon be brought into being by a miraculous act of god.

The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus, from the Jesus Seminar.

- Eighty-two percent of the words ascribed to Jesus in the gospels were not actually spoken by him, according to the Jesus Seminar. How do scholars account for this pronounced discrepancy? Is it realistic to think that his disciples remembered so little of what he said, or that they remembered his words so inaccurately?
- Before sketching the answer that gospel specialists in the Jesus Seminar give, it is necessary to address an issue that invariably—and inevitably—comes up for those whose views of the Bible are held captive by prior theological commitments. The issue is the alleged verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible.

Distinguishing Jesus from Christ

- In the course of the modern critical study of the Bible, which was inspired by the Reformation (begun formally, 1517 C.E.) but originated with the Enlightenment (about 1690 C.E.), biblical scholars and theologians alike have learned to distinguish the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith. It has been a painful lesson for both the church and scholarship. The distinction between the two figures is the difference between a historical person who lived in a particular time and place and was subject to the limitations of a finite existence, and a figure who has been assigned a mythical role, in which he descends from heaven to rescue humankind and, of course, eventually returns there. A

Christian wrinkle in this scheme has the same heavenly figure returning to earth at the end of history to inaugurate a new age.

- The church appears to smother the historical Jesus by superimposing this heavenly figure on him in the creed: Jesus is displaced by the Christ, as the so-called Apostles' Creed makes evident:

[End of Article]

Sound confusing? Well I'd say *'they certainly are!'*

This is part of the spiritual battle for Truth. The more you read, the more sickening it becomes. People – Self Proclaimed Unbiased Scholars - attempting to determine the authenticity of the words of Christ, governed by the overarching worldview and premise, of denying the inspiration and authority of Scripture from the beginning.

How do these so called, scholars, come up with such thoughts? Perhaps this sounds far-fetched to you, and that this is only the perspective of a fringe-pagan organization, bent on destroying the validity and authority of God's Word the Bible. Yet every time we ask the question, "Did God really Say?" or "Did God really mean?" or "God surely didn't mean that we take that at face value?" – Then we are aligning ourselves with others, like those of the Jesus Project who, through their musings and minimizing the person, claims and works of a Holy God, destroy the foundation for faith and biblical authority.

What's a Disciple to Do?

APPLICATION

Once you begin to deny divine truth, Biblical authority and faith foundation, you remove all reference points for Christian faith. This leaves us with the findings of fallible men who at the very basis of their purpose, deny God, Truth and the miraculous.

As believers and true followers of Jesus, we must be about God's kingdom work of making disciples. That involves doing what we can to prepare the soil of the human heart, to be more receptive to the seed of God's holy word. It means helping others to understand the person of Jesus, the message of the gospel, and a little bit of the life of and spiritual state of the hearer. This requires, Life-on-Life and Person-to-Person interaction.

If you are thinking; “I am too busy and my schedule is too full - I can’t squeeze one more thing into my life, much less discipling another person.” Then we still don’t understand Biblical discipleship. Discipleship is not doing something more, but doing what we are already doing, only with a refocused purpose of recognizing God’s kingdom moments all around us and responding to them in an obedient and sensitive manner.

Our purpose must be to help others understand the Truth of Scripture and the message of the gospel in order to become true and solid followers of Jesus Christ. In order to accomplish this...

- 1) Our own lives must be based upon the Truth and Authority of God’s Holy Word, without wavering; that is the Holy, inerrant, and fully inspired Word of God.**
- 2) Our message must be based upon the Truth and Authority of God’s Holy Word without editing. Our purpose must be to help others understand the Truth of Scripture and the message of the gospel as it is, in order to become true and solid followers of Jesus Christ.**
- 3) If Satan can convince us that the Bible is Not God’s Holy Word, then the foundation of the faith and the ministry of the Church is without source, guidelines or power.**
- 4) Ultimately, if the Bible is not God’s Holy Inspired Word, then it is nothing more than man’s best guess.**

As we conclude this lesson, we realize this lesson is not simply about being fruitful in our proclamation of God’s Word. It is also about the inexpressible importance of being good students of Gods’ Word, and that we teach the very meaning that God intended it to convey.

Dirty Discipleship is doing what we can to prepare the soil of the human heart, to be more receptive to the seed of Gods’ Holy Word. Anything less than that, is unacceptable.

-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

Q: What is the most important point in this parable?

Q: What is the key principle to any person being productive or unproductive in their discipleship ministry? _____

Q: We are in a battle! What kind of battle and what is the battle over? _____

Q: What did the Jesus project come up with? _____

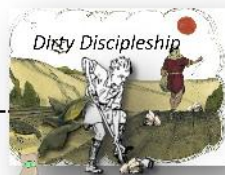
-----*Praying It Through*-----

Dear Father,

There is nothing more important than you Truth. There is nothing more important for your people than to be able to help others understand in order to believe and be saved.

Strengthen me in the battle against Satan's attacks, confusion and other tactics to keep me from being productive in Your Kingdom work.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen!*



“The Risk of Living In the World”

Mat.13:24-30 // 36-43

June 22, 2014

-- Parable of Wheat and Tares --

[Case Study: City Council and Homosexual Anti-discrimination]

*Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the
kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear*

--Mat. 13:43

In the world of dangerous and extreme sports, there is a saying:

“The greatest danger is to risk nothing”.

--Sports Commercial

Study: *What is a Person to Believe?*

What happens when Dirty discipleship does not take place? As God’s efforts go forth, so go the deeds of the enemy. God sows life. Satan sows life substitutes. At times it may appear as though the substitutes are winning. Hang on! The harvest is on its way!

THE PARABLE (Mat.13:24-30)

This is the parable of the Wheat and Tares, or Good seed and bad seed.

Mat 13:24-30 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good

seed in his field, (25) but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. (26) So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. (27) And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' (28) He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' (29) But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. (30) Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Outline:

the Seed (v24

- 1) Good seed is sown (v24
- 2) Bad seed is sown (25

The Action (26

- 1) Growing together (26

That is, good and bad seed growing together.

The Dilemma (27-28

- 1) What action is taken?
- 2) Grow together till harvest (v29

From an earthly perspective, allowing the wheat and the tares (weeds or briars) to grow together is a bit risky, don't you think?

JESUS' INTERPRETATION (Mat.13:36-43

This is the 2nd of 8 parables in this chapter. But not till after the 4th parable did the disciples come to Jesus as ask Him to explain the 2nd parable.

Mat 13:36-43 Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." (37) He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. (38) The field is the world, and

the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, (39) and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. (40) Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. (41) The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, (42) and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (43) Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

The Players (v37-39)

Now the Sowers are different from the previous parable.

- 1) Sower of good seed is Son of Man, Jesus (v37)
- 2) Field is the world (v38a)
- 3) good seed are sons of the kingdom (v38b)

You and I, as believers in Christ are the seed of the Kingdom. We are also sown by Christ into the field, where we now live, work, play sports, tend our gardens, volunteer at school, sit along the sidelines and cheer for our children, attend play practice, share a back lawn or

- 4) weeds (tares) are sons of the evil one (v38c)
- 5) Enemy is the devil and the sower of the weeds (v39a)
- 6) Harvest is end of the world (v39b)
- 7) Reapers are angels (v39c)

The Process (v40-43)

- 1) Wicked will be gathered (v40-42)
- 2) Righteous will shine (v43)

I find it interesting that in *the parable of the Sower*, the good seed was gobbled up, withered up and choked out. But here the good seed, which is not the seed of God's word, but the seed being Christians themselves, who are to grow up living amongst the

weed or living in the wicked sinful world, until the harvest of all the earth takes place.

Is there not a risk that the sons of the kingdom are gobbled up, withered away or choked out? The risk is no doubt there. But in this parable the risk is not the focus, but the expectation of the effect of the children of the kingdom.

“The greatest danger is to risk nothing.” The greatest risk for the church may not be in living in the world, but in living in the world and risking nothing to reach the world!

The fact is, at some point, at some time, at some stage of the game, Christians must grow and mature to a level that we are strong enough and work together well enough, that we can stand firm in the faith, in the face of a world that is filled with sin and corruptions. And our hearts must at some point, to some degree begin to ache for those who are bound for an eternal hell, apart from Christ and apart from any hope.

WHAT IS THE RISK?

Certainly the risks are abounding: temptation, personal sin, bad reputation, becoming like the world, personal loss, etc.

What is the risk of living in the world?

* the greatest risk is not being contaminated by the world, but failing to connect with the world in a manner in which we can connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the Church. Temptation, personal sin, bad reputation, becoming like the world, personal loss, are all legitimate risks. But certainly these things are to be overcome, as the church serves and fights together.

We also must be willing to ask, ‘*what might be gained?*’

- Living with the world until the end or the harvest. The risk is living in the world, but not loving the things of the world, or possessions or lifestyles.

1John 2:15-16 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires

of the eyes and pride of life--is not from the Father but is from the world.

- Remaining pure and making a difference

James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

* There is always the risk of keeping one's self unstained by the world. There is the risk of not making a difference for Christ. But then again we cannot make a difference for Christ's Kingdom unless we are living in the world and among the mission field to which we are called to reach.

- We must not be compromised in convictions or calling ^[2 Peter 1:10]
- We must be living differently, exhibiting personal holiness, but not self-righteousness.
- We should also be living *redemptively*; living a life of service to Christ, and trust God for life-changing, difference-making ministry to take place, ^[1 Pet.2:9].
- We also run the risk of Culture-infiltrating, darkness-penetrating, lost-reaching, soul-winning, disciple-making, risk-taking influence.

What is the risk of living in the church and failing to reach the world?

* *Failing to accomplish that for which Christ has sown us.*

Failing to grow. Failing to mature. Failing to bear fruit. Failing to live as light, effectively and redemptively in a dark world, because we were afraid of someone getting the wrong idea as to why we were socializing and connecting with unbelievers.

There are times in the life of the Church, when the greatest danger of living in the world is not becoming like the world, but failing to risk reaching the lost of the world.

Right now, homosexuality is a hot topic and not taboo to talk about. Because of the non-discrimination law, homosexuals are talking. Let's talk with them.

We need a Better Understanding of Our World, in order to Help our world better Understand Truth.

What happens when we do not engage our mission field and do not implement dirty discipleship? People are not reached for Christ, lives are not changed and the culture continues on its downward slide.

This week we had a city council mtg in Mdvl about passing a non-Discrimination law for Homosexuals, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender. The world is talking, lets risk engaging them in conversation.

Perhaps this may help us understand our world and this topic.

Reasons For Preferring homosexuality (1940s and 1970)

FAMILY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

PO Box 62640 Colorado Springs, CO 80962 Phone: (303) 681-3113

1. early homosexual experience(s) with adults and/or peers - 22%
2. homosexual friends/ around homosexuals a lot - 16%
3. poor relationship with mother - 15%
4. unusual development (was a sissy, artistic, couldn't get along with own sex, tom-boy, et cetera) - 15%
5. poor relationship with father - 14%
6. heterosexual partners unavailable - 12%
7. social ineptitude - 9%
8. born that way - 9%

What Causes Male Homosexuality?

THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Summary: The psychological and scientific communities provide much speculation but few reliable answers about the causes of same-sex attraction. Our many years of experience suggest a clearer perspective.

Statement From The American Psychological Association (APA)

The official explanation from the APA says that there is no consensus about what causes homosexuality. But we have observed eight predisposing factors that are common in the backgrounds of men with same-sex attraction.

1. Unhealthy Childhood Relationships With Females

Females can wound young boys by smothering, criticizing, controlling, and ignoring proper boundaries. Some boys who have experienced such wounding develop unhealthy relationships with women in adulthood in which they either push them too far away or hold them too close.

2. Distorted Concepts of Gender

Unhealthy childhood relationships with females can distort a man's view of the female gender, affect how he sees himself in relation to women, damage his sense of masculinity, and prevent the natural development of a sense of genderedness. This can leave the individual without a sense of the opposite sex as complementary and attractive.

3. Feeling Incongruent With One's Own Gender

Feeling incongruent with what a man believes his gender requires may create a psychologically unstable situation, resulting in the unconscious mind compensating through fixations or attractions toward males and masculinity.

4. Problems In Relationships With Other Males

During childhood, some boys disconnect from other males due to negative experiences with males, negative stereotypes about males, and fear of being seen as strange. This leaves their normal needs for same-sex connection and bonding unmet, resulting in longings and cravings for male closeness.

5. Sexual Conditioning

Sexual desire can be conditioned through pairing specific stimuli with sexual arousal. Male-on-male sexual abuse and early exposure to male pornography may create or intensify homosexual arousal for some boys.

6. Sexual Abuse

In addition to its potential role in conditioning sexual arousal, sexual abuse can create or intensify gender

incongruity, disaffiliation from other males, and if the perpetrator is female, fear or hatred of women. It may also create repetitive patterns of compulsive sexual behavior.

7. Certain Biological and Physical Issues

Research on direct biological and genetic causes of homosexuality is inconclusive. But our experience suggests that certain biological factors can have an important indirect impact by affecting other parts of the developmental pathway.

8. Certain Emotional and Psychological Problem

Certain emotional and psychological issues may increase the likelihood of developing homosexuality. These issues probably don't play a causal role, but may intensify the effect of other predisposing factors, particularly gender incongruity, same-sex disaffiliation, sexual conditioning, and sexual abuse.

WHAT'S A DISCIPLE TO DO? APPLICATION :

* Homosexuality, like any other violation of God's Holy word and Holy Character, is sin.

WHY IS HOMOSEXUALITY WRONG OR A SIN?

1) God's word is clear about the sin of homosexuality.
We all have a sin nature.

Lev 20:13 If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

Gen 19:5 And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them."

Rom 1:25-28 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (26) For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; (27) and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were

consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. (28) And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

1Cor. 6:9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,

1Tim. 1:9-10 understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, (10) the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,

We don't have to be ashamed or embarrassed to admit that God's word *is God's word* and that God's word states that homosexuality is sin. Just like any kind of sexual activity outside of the Biblical confines of marriage as being between one man and one woman for life - is sin. Lying is sin. Idolatry is sin. Stealing is Sin. As one woman said to me Wed. night if you work on the Sabbath, you are guilty of sin.

2) Nature evidences that Heterosexuality is normal.

3) The human body and reproductive process is dependent on the heterosexual perspective and practice. Men with men or women with women, cannot reproduce.

Following the city council mtg on Wednesday, I was talking with a lesbian of about 60 yrs old. At the end of our conversation she thanked me for listening to her and I thanked her for listening to me. Then she says.. [arms open wide for a hug] I was thinking, what if someone sees me?

HOW ARE WE TO VIEW HOMOSEXUALS?

1. Like anyone else
2. Created in the image of God (Gen.1)

3. Objects of Gods' love (Jn.3:16)
4. Those for whom Jesus died and shed his blood as payment for their sin (Rom.5:8)
5. Fellow, broken human beings with emotional, physical and spiritual needs, just like us.
6. Those in need of being loved with the love of Christ, discipled in the Truth of God's word and reached with the life redeeming and transformation power of the gospel. They need someone to connect with them LifeOnLife and PersonToPerson to disciple, teach, and model the Christ-focused and Spirit-filled life.

HOW ARE WE TO TREAT HOMOSEXUALS?

1. We should utilize God's Biblical principles for all relationships. Treat them like any other person – do unto others....., that meant Christian and non Christians alike.
2. patience and understanding, - loving compassion – concern for their physical needs and their sinful state -- eternal destination
3. Peaceable (Rom.12:15.....)
4. Share faith and the gospel like you would to any other unsaved person, (Mat.28:18)
5. Homosexual "Christians" – stand gracefully on the word of God

Col 4:5-6 ESV (5) Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. (6) Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Mat 5:14-16 ESV "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. (15) Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. (16) In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

1Pet. 2:12 ESV Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation

In other words, when people say bad or evil things about you, simply live in a manner that proves them wrong.

1Pet. 3:15-16 ESV but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, (16) having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

In our culture today, we can no longer differentiate between Christians and homosexuals; in other words, the homosexual advocates are over here and the Christians are over here. 2 homosexuals I spoke with, told me they were *Christians* and faithfully attend a church in Mdvl. So traditional labels do not hold up in these kinds of gatherings.

Traditional categories are being blurred. When we gather for debate, we are striking at a deeper problem with society; the problem of sin and the need for salvation. Unrepentant sin is a sign of an unconverted, unbeliever. Therefore, a sinner and all the more a “professing” Christian who is living in unrepentant Sin and fighting for their sin to be accepted, legalized and mandated is not going to be very open to being called a sinner. If we are willing to admit it, neither would we.

It seems to me, that we are where we are, due to the fact that we as Christians have become apathetic towards our responsibility of discipleship, and have not adequately reached our own Jerusalem, home mission field for Christ. We have not adequately disciple and reached the lost with the life giving and life transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We have reached around the world, but we have not reached the world around us. Engaging people in conversation, with life-on-life and person-to-person connections is crucial. So the culture is what it is, and some feel the best they can do is strike out at the symptoms.

I fully believe homosexuality is sin, just as any kind of immorality

or violation of God's word and Character. I also fully believe, we must engage our community in life and conversation. My concern is also that town hall debates do more to raise barriers than to remove them. Those settings do not typically lend themselves to conversions. Jesus was full of Grace and Truth (Jn.1:14). Liberal churches today are strong on grace but weak on Truth. Strong on grace with the whole open hearts, open doors, open minds – your fine just like you are. I'm OK, You're OK.

Town hall meetings however, can be very valuable. We can let our Government officials see by our numbers, where we stand. These meetings also allow our voice to be heard, for now. It places those who attend, right in the middle of a ready-made opportunity to lovingly engage in conversation. (This is differentiating between debate and dialogue.) It also may provide a format to briefly share the gospel message.

Fundamentals, or Evangelicals are often strong on truth but weak in the area of Grace. We call sin, sin. We're not afraid to confront sin. Etc. But they are often very weak grace, loving with the love of Christ, as we evidence the life and love and likeness of Jesus in our interactions.

If someone is going to be offended by our message of sin and salvation, let it be by the offense from the gospel itself, God have mercy on the church if they are offended and driven away because of our offensive harshness and lacking in the character of our Lord Jesus.

Jesus interacted with the sinful culture of his day; the woman caught in adultery; He interacted with the rich young ruler; with the cheating stealing Tax collectors; these he interacted with, graciously helped them see their sinfulness and told them to sin no more. I'm not saying it is wrong to enter into debates, nor that the debate at City hall was wrong. It was probably the right thing to do. I simply don't believe they are the most productive and fruitful ways to reach our mission field.

We are living in the World. Be cautious of the world's influence on you.

Do not be defeated because of the world's growing influence on our culture. Risk making a difference for Christ in an unsaved person's life. I think the greatest risk in living in the world, may not become like the world, but the greatest risk may be doing nothing to reach the world in which we live.

The problem of the "tares" will not be fully addressed until the "harvest" at the end of the age, when the Son of Man will finally resolve this problem, and make all things right. Christians should simply rejoice at their righteousness shining in the harvest of the last days, and be motivated to sacrificial discipleship, with heart breaking concern of those who are lost and cast into the fire of eternal punishment.

One Christian made the statement; "Why wouldn't I want to hire a homosexual if he/she was a good worker? That's like the mission field coming to me."

-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

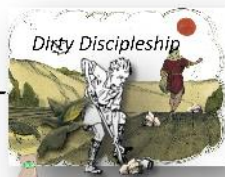
Q: What are some personal risks for you in living among the world? _____

Q: How are you living among unbelievers? What opportunities do you frequently have which allow you to engage the sinful culture around you for Christ? _____

-----*Praying It Through*-----

Dear Father, Please keep me pure as I live amongst a people of unclean living. Help me to have a heart for the lost as you do. Help me to see even the worst sinner through your loving eyes of compassion.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen!* -----



Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

Is Jesus Christ the Savior of *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
--*Romans 3:23*

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come
from God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only
begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should
not perish, but have everlasting life. --*John 3:16*

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him
to die in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is
eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
-- *Romans 6:23*

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of
Jesus Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were
still sinners, Christ died for us. ---*Romans 5:8*

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved." -- *Rom 10:13*

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name,
he gave the right to become children of God, - *John 1:12*

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you
are truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

*Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your
sins and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.*

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. *He already knows.*
- also Confess Jesus as you LORD.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:
Christ E. Free Church, PO Box 619, 19682 Hill Rd,
Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, www.christefca.org

We have a free booklet on:

Water Baptism: *The First Step of Believer's Obedience.*
and also

A New Creation: *Beginning Your New Life In Christ*

It is our prayer that you find Jesus Christ to be, your greatest purpose, your highest calling, your soul's source and joy, and your all-consuming passion.

Other Free Booklets

1 PETER, pt.1-2 (2Vol): *Suffering in Sojourning*

1 PETER, pt.3-5 (3Vol): *The Church God Always Wanted*

100 YEARS OF MISSIONS: *So Where Are We Now?*

A NEW CREATION: *Beginning Your New Life In Christ*

ADVENT: *The Submission of Christ*

AMERICA ADRIFT: *A Culture in Crisis and the Challenges Before the Church*

CHALLENGES OF FAITH *From Characters in the Bible*

CHRIST'S COMING KINGDOM: *What Will Be Will Be*

CPR Evangelism: *Helping others Step from Death to Life*

DIRTY DISCIPLESHIP: *Preparing the Soil of the Heart for the Seed of the Word.*

ETERNITY: *What Will It Really Be Like?*

GIFTS AND FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: *A Match Made in Heaven*

GOD'S BLUEPRINT FOR THE FAMILY: *The Intelligent Divine Design*

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF: *When Pain Won't End and Hope Seems Lost*

HOLY WEEK QUESTIONS: *Life After Death & How Dead Will We Really Be?*

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ALMIGHTY: *Life Transforming Prayer & Communion*

IN THE SHADOW OF THE SHEPHERD: *Sheep Becoming Like the Servant Shepherd*

INTERESTS AND INQUIRIES: *Curious Cultural Concerns for The Future*

JAMES (4Vol): *Faith That Makes A Difference*

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KINGDOM VISION: *Seeing the World and God's Kingdom as God does*

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MAKING LIFE WORK (2Vol): *Discovering Your God Focused Purpose in Living*

PRAYERS OF DESPERATION: *Prayer God Answers But No One Wants To Pray*

Ruth: *Our Unmerited Blessedness in the LORD.*

SURVIVING THE STORMS OF THE SOUL: *The Presence of God for the Troubled Soul*

THE HOLY SPIRIT: *The Friend You Need To Get To Know*

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: *Seeing and Living the Kingdom of Heaven*

THE WONDER OF IT ALL: *The End Times of Trials, from Mark 13*

TRAGEDIES OF LIFE: *Things God Allows & Blessings from Heaven's Perspective*

WATER BAPTISM: *The First Step of Believer's Obedience or Disobedience.*

WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER: *A Handbook for Pre-Marriage Considerations*

YOUR LIFE IS LIKE...: *The Challenge to Disciple A Community*

-- All downloadable free resources at: www.christefca.org --

Foreign missions is no more or no less,
Than the far-reaching effects of our own
Personal Discipleship Efforts.



Life Line Resources

May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit, in His Church and throughout our mission field.

Downloadable free resources at: www.christefca.org