

Study Guide

Mark 4:1-20

Big Idea: *If God's Word is true, then I will really listen.*

1. Read Mark 4:1-2. By now people are coming from more than 100-mile radius. Many are desperate, many need healing, and many are probably just curious. Why do you think Jesus separates Himself in a boat and chooses to teach in parables (side-stories with hidden meanings)?
2. Read Mark 4:3-9. Notice how the story starts and ends with advice to listen. Note also that there are no bells and whistles, no jokes and no compelling arguments- just a simple story about agriculture. What do you think Jesus means by verse 9?
3. Read Mark 4:10-13. There was a smaller crowd that hung around and inquired further about the parable. They were rewarded for it. What is the danger of not "lingering to inquire"?
4. Read Mark 4:14-20. What does the seed represent (see also Luke 8:11 & Heb. 4:12)? Slowly read about each heart condition and discuss them one at a time. Do you see people like this? Do you see yourself in one of these? What is God saying to you through these examples?
 - a. Calloused Heart- Is my heart hardened towards the things of God?
 - b. Shallow Heart- Is my idea of following Jesus too shallow?
 - c. Crowded Heart- Have I allowed too many other things to crowd out God's voice?
 - d. Receptive Heart- Do I regularly hear from God and see God using me to produce fruit?

Application

If God's word is true, then I will really listen! What changes do I need to make to be more receptive to God and His word?

Message Slides

Mark 4:1-20

Theme- If God's word is true, then I will really listen.

Introduction (1-2)

Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ²And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them:

A. The Story (3-9)

³"Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow.⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.⁸And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." ⁹And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

B. Secrets! (10-13)

¹⁰And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, ¹²so that "they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.'" ¹³And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?"

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1. "those around Him"- (Proximity)
2. "asked Him" (Curiosity)
3. "given the secret" (Mystery)

The key to understanding

¹³And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?"

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1 Cor. 2:10- "these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the deep things of God."

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1 Cor. 2:12- "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God."

C. The Actual Story (14-20)

¹⁴The sower sows the word.

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Heb. 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

(add icons I had Dan create)

1. The Callous heart.

¹⁵And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.

2. The Shallow heart.

¹⁶And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.

3. The Crowded heart.

¹⁸And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, ¹⁹but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

4. The Receptive heart

²⁰But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

What is fruit?

Rom. 1:13- to bring the gospel to the lost

Gal. 5:22,23- Christian Character

Col. 1:10- Good works

Theme- If God's word is true, then I will really listen.

For Reflection

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1. What "cares of the world" tend to keep me from drawing closer to God?
2. Do I feel like God has disappointed me? What might He be doing through my pain?

3. How can I make it more of a priority to really listen to God's voice in my life?