



THE PARABLES

A 12-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

Week 2 – Hearing and Responding to God’s Word (Sunday, May 17, 2026) *The Condition of the Heart*

Introductory Remarks

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus compares the human heart to different types of soil. Some hearts are hard and resistant, others are shallow or distracted, while some are receptive and produce spiritual fruit. The Parable of the Growing Seed reminds us that spiritual growth is often gradual and unseen, yet God is actively at work beneath the surface. Together, these parables teach that hearing God’s Word is not enough; transformation depends on how we respond to it. Distractions, worries, pride, temptation, and worldly pursuits can prevent growth if left unchecked. Healthy spiritual growth requires humility, consistency, and a willingness to let God shape us over time. Ultimately, the condition of our hearts determines whether God’s truth takes root and bears lasting fruit in our lives.

Lesson Outline

- Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1–23)
- Parable of the Growing Seed (Mark 4:26–29)

Key idea: Spiritual growth depends on the condition of the heart

1. Which soil in the *Parable of the Sower* do you think best reflects the spiritual condition of most people today?
2. Why is it possible for someone to hear God’s Word and still not be transformed by it?
3. In what ways does spiritual growth resemble the process described in the *Parable of the Growing Seed*?
4. What “thorns” most commonly choke out spiritual growth today?
5. What practical habits help cultivate a heart that is receptive to God’s Word?





Matthew 13:1–23 (NIV)

The Parable of the Sower

¹³ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

¹⁰ The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

¹¹ He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. ¹² Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables:

“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.
¹⁴ In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:
“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.
¹⁵ For this people’s heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.”

¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. ¹⁷ For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

¹⁸ “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²² The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Mark 4:26-29 (NIV)

The Parable of the Growing Seed

²⁶ He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

