

Why Does Church Work For Some And Not Others?

Jesus' only sermon that needed a lot of help:

Matthew 13:1-23, 5:6, 2 Samuel 12:1-7

The only one responsible for my **SPIRITUAL CONDITION** is me.

Jesus wants to be our **HEALER**, not **HELPER**.

The four types of people listening today:

Matthew 13:1-23, James 1:22-25, Psalms 1:1-3, Galatians 5:22-25

Paths:

Rocks:

Thorns:

Miracle Grow:

Tips for tilling the hard soil:

Matthew 13:1-23, Psalms 139:23-24

1. Show up with an **EXPECTATION** that God has something **FOR ME**.
2. Pray: Just ask God to give me **ONE THING** that I need to **HEAR**.
3. Attitude: Be willing to **SURRENDER** to whatever God is **SAYING**.
4. Worship: Set my **HEART** and **MIND** on who **GOD IS**.

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1. Show up with an _____ that God has something _____.
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3. Attitude: Be willing to _____ to whatever God is _____.
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DISCUSSION GUIDE

These questions are designed to help groups discuss the weekend teaching while building relationships with each other and applying God's Word to our lives.

January 18, 2026

WARM UP



This weekend, we studied The Parable of the Sower. Parables are short stories that Jesus used to teach spiritual truths by comparing them to everyday life, but they were intentionally complex, meant to provoke the listener to ask questions and lean in.

1. Are there any sayings you heard growing up that seemed confusing, silly, or strange? Do they make more sense now?
2. Jesus' parables featured many different types of places: fields, vineyards, homes, roads, banquet halls, and more. Which do you connect with? Are you more of a country person or a city person? Indoors or outdoors? Coastal or mountain?
3. Is there a part of this message that has stayed on your mind after hearing it?

KNOW IT



After learning about the four soils, which one best describes where you're at today? Depending on our response to God's message, our spiritual life will either grow, stagnate, or be nonexistent.

1. Read James 1:22-27. After reading this warning from James, what do you think are some pitfalls of merely listening to God's Word without putting it into practice? How might we deceive ourselves by being hearers of the Word, but not doers?
2. The point of this parable is to be the type of soil that bears fruit. Read Psalm 1:1-3 and Galatians 5:22-25. How will the Fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians shape your day-to-day? How does the image of a strong, healthy tree in Psalm 1 illustrate the benefits of a life surrendered to Jesus?

SHARE IT



1. Share about a season in your life when you felt your heart was hardened or being choked out by "thorns and weeds." What was tripping you up at the time? What helped (or could have helped) you grow?

2. How about a time when you knew you were growing out of "good soil": a moment where you experienced transformation, encouragement, or God at work? What was different about the condition of your heart than when it was hardened?

LIVE IT



Prepare the soil:

1. What are some ways you can come into God's presence with an open and ready heart? Whether through worship, prayer, Bible study, time with Christ-centered friends, or something similar, choose at least one practice you'd like to try daily this week with the goal of becoming more open to God's work in your life.

2. Look again at the fruit in Galatians. Which one is most lacking or least evident right now? Share with your group and pray for each other this week to walk in the newness of life that comes from growing out of good, fertile spiritual soil!

TIPS ON GROUP PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of being in a Life Group. Over the years, we've found that group prayer goes better when we follow three simple guidelines.

WE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME - Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request, either before prayer begins or during prayer time. Once a topic is introduced, the group focuses on that request alone. Once it's covered, the group moves on to the next topic.

PRAY MORE THAN ONCE - Because the group is focusing on one topic at a time, each person is encouraged to pray several times during the prayer time for those topics they feel most led to pray about. No one is required to pray.

WE KEEP OUR PRAYERS SHORT AND SIMPLE - Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it's hard for the other members to stay focused, and long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group. No one is required to pray out loud.