



SPRING 2024 // WEEK 3

Life Group Questions

Kingdom Stories: Living in the One True Kingdom // April 20-21, 2024

The Four Soils // Matthew 13:1-23

Introduction

We return to Matthew 13 to walk through the parable at the beginning of the chapter, the Parable of the Sower. Jesus speaks to a large crowd conveying a kingdom story that depicts details about the nature of the king, the kingdom, and the king's subjects. As you prepare to discuss the passage with your life group, you will notice that rather than going in verse order, the questions start at the beginning with the parable then skip to the explanation, and then return to the middle of the passage. This is to help you interpret the greater meaning of the story. May we have ears to hear, and eyes to see all that Jesus conveys to us through His Word.

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Due to preferences over a wide range of groups, we do not expect you will cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

- 1) Who (besides Jesus) do you think tells the best stories? What makes him or her a great storyteller?

- 2) Did you try one of the Personal Spiritual Exercises last week? How did it go? Did God use it in your life in a specific way?

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:

- a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
- b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
- c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you

Read the full passage together with your group.

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) In Matthew chapters 12 & 13, verses 1 – 3, Matthew gives you the context in which Jesus delivers this parable. **What are the contextual details (e.g., location, audience, timing) you notice in the first three verses?**

Remember back to the parables we have studied thus far. **How is the context of the Parable of the Sower different than the others we have discussed? Why might this detail be relevant in studying the Parable of the Sower?**

- 2) One advantage to the Parable of the Sower is that Jesus not only tells the story (13:3-9) but he also explains the story to his disciples (13:18-23). **Considering the original audience in Matthew 13, what does this suggest about the ways King Jesus values and engages with the crowds versus his disciples?**

Use the parable verses and the explanation verses to complete the chart. Discuss your answers with your life group.

<i>Soil Type</i>	Seed Outcome	Explanation	1 st Century Representation	Current Day Representation
The Path				
Rocky Ground				

Thorns

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Good Soil

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3) This parable looks at how the word of the kingdom (the Gospel) will be received by people. **As you look at your completed chart, what details do you notice about the kingdom, the King, or who inhabits the kingdom?**

4) As Jesus helps us understand the way of the kingdom, it reminds us that people will respond to the Gospel message differently. Our response is based on the texture of our heart: hard, rocky, sharp, or yielding. **How does the parable cause you to process your own personal story of receiving Christ? Share any personal insights or discoveries you have made with your group.**

How do these details change the way you share the gospel with others?

Think of a specific person that you would like to see come to Christ. **How does the meaning and message of the parable change the way you pray for this person?**

- 5) The parable is followed by a short conversation between Jesus and his disciples (verses 10 – 17). The disciples were having a hard time understanding why Jesus was teaching in parables. **What are the disciples' questions and how does Jesus answer them?** (To get a better understanding of Jesus' answer, considering reading verses 10 -17 in a common language translation such as The Message.)

When you question God's ways in your life or in the world around you, do you find it easy or hard to go to God with your questions? What helps you gain understanding even in the questioning? Share a specific example of this in your life with your group.

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts. **Next week in Life Group, take a few moments to share how the Lord may have used this exercise in your life.**

Prayer Focus: In study question four, you thought of a specific person in your life that you would like to see come to Christ. Commit to praying for this friend or loved-one in the coming week. Focus your prayers to reflect the change in how you want to pray for them.

Scripture Focus: The Parable of the Sower is recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. To develop a complete picture of this scene, from 3 different authors, read the parable in each book and take note of the similarities and nuances in each text.

Matthew 13:1 – 23

Mark 4:1 – 12

Luke 8:4 – 10

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?