



Sermon Discussion Guide

AUGUST 18, 2019 • REFOCUS • EMILY VERMILYA
MATTHEW 13:1-13; 16-17

ACCEPT

As the rhythm of late summer and early fall approaches, ask how God might be leading your group to help more people connect to the body of Christ. What might God be calling your group to do?

- Invite more people to your group?
- Commission some from your group to start a new group?
- Begin to take responsibility for caring for the people who sit around you on Sunday mornings?
- What might God be calling your group to do?

ENCOURAGE

“The wise are glad to be instructed,
but babbling fools fall flat on their faces.” **Proverbs 10:8**

- What were the positive, encouraging experiences people saw this week? Where might God have been in those situations?
- What were some of the difficult situations or experiences of the week? Where might God have been during those times?

Share Scriptural words of encouragement with each other based on how you have been praying for each other this week.

TEACH

Teaching Summary

Listening is an art form necessary for those who desire to know, understand, and follow God. The parables of Christ call us to move beyond merely *hearing* the proclaimed word to truly *listening* for the fullness of the voice of God. Though usually offered as simple stories, the parables require us to look beyond the obvious for the deeper intended message and meaning. In the Parable of the Sower (as it has often been entitled), we find a reminder that in order to receive the Word of the Lord and see it flourish in our lives, we must refocus and commit ourselves to cultivating soil in which it can take root and grow.

Review Questions

1. What is the state of the soil of your soul?
2. What practices are you engaging to help make the soil of your soul more fertile?
3. How does tending to your soul impact the souls of people around you? How does the way others tend to their soul tend to your soul?

Transformation Questions

1. What do you think God is saying to you?
2. What is keeping you from doing this?
3. If you were to do it, what might be a good first step?
4. Who will you tell? Or who will you ask to help you?

REFLECT AND CORRECT

Reflect on these words from Psalm 51

Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Renew a loyal spirit within me.
Do not banish me from your presence,
and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and make me willing to obey you.
Then I will teach your ways to rebels,
and they will return to you.

- What do these verses bring to your mind? Share how these verses might lead you to pray.

SERVE

Philippians 2:4 says, "Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too."

- Which of your "interests" might be distracting you from considering the interests of others?

PRAY

Here is a guided prayer based on James 1. The leader can start and people in the group can finish each sentence.

"We must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry."

(give people a moment to be silent and listen)

- "If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. I need wisdom this week for..."
- "Be sure that your faith is in God alone. I confess that at times my faith is in..."
- "But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. God, I hear you asking me to..."

"God chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession."

Amen.

*Share ways you can pray for each other over the coming week.
Spend time praying with each other now, listening to God for ways to pray.*