

# The Gospel of Mark

**Group Guide:** Week 9, Mark 4:1-34

## INTRODUCTION

Up to this point in the story Jesus has done many things and people have reacted in different ways. Some are following him and doing his will, others have outright rejected him, his family is confused at his teachings, and others simply want to use him for the healing benefits. Why are people responding to Jesus in the way they are? In chapter 4 Jesus is going to speak in parables to explain why people respond to the Word in different ways. People respond to Jesus according to the disposition of their hearts. Jesus compares the growing of the word of God in people's hearts as seeds planted in soil. Mark is subtly asking the reader, "What kind of soil is your heart?" Not only does the soil matter but the nature of seeds growth is slow and gradual. Jesus is also teaching the people about the nature of the Kingdom of God. It grows through the Word. This is a different Kingdom than the people expected. Is this the same type of Kingdom that we expect in our lives?

## PRAYER

### READ

Ask two group members to read Mark 4:1-34

### SUMMARIZE

Ask two group members who didn't summarize last week to summarize the passage this week.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share your experience, if any, with growing plants. *Did you enjoy it? Was it easy or frustrating? Explain why. What are important factors in growing a healthy plant?*

2. The parable of the sower is one of those parables that can be shocking

## N.T. FURTHER READING

Matt. 13:1-23; Luke 8:4-18; 2 Tim. 3:15-16

## O.T. FURTHER READING

Isa 6 (esp. v. 9-10); Ezekiel 31 (esp. v. 6)

## FURTHER STUDY

As you read write out any words in this passage that would be helpful for you to look up in a dictionary.

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and convicting for readers. *For you what is most shocking or convicting about the parable? Why? Confess what “thorns” you have in your heart that keep you from bearing more fruit.*

3. *Jesus indicates in verse 13 that the key to understanding all parables is in the parable of the sower. How does this explain why Jesus speaks in parables? How might the audience present during the teaching of this parable parallel with the types of soil in the parable?*

4. *In verses 21-25, Jesus speaks of the Word as light rather than seed. The Word for some is hidden or misunderstood but for others it is shining through. How are we inclined to hide our “light” knowing that the “seeds” we plant might not bring immediate growth?*

5. *There is a mystery that surrounds the parable of the seed growing (vs 26-29) and the parable of the mustard seed (vs. 30-32). We don’t understand how a plant grows, nor is there logic behind how such a small seed produces such great growth. Share how you have seen the Kingdom of God grow in the same way. What are ways you have seen God defy human understanding to expand His Kingdom?*

6. *The last verse of this section is, “He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.” Did you notice that we as readers have the same advantage as the disciples? By the grace of God Jesus is also explaining everything to us. Share why you are thankful the Lord has spoken plainly to us in his Word? How should this reality change the way you appreciate the Bible?*

## NOTES

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## RESPONSE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*Personal:* The parable of the sower tells us that good growth comes from good soil, or rather a clean heart. *Confess God’s graciousness in giving us as Christians a clean heart.*

*Church:* At service this Sunday, how might you be faithful in planting seeds by speaking God’s Word into someone’s life?

*World:* Discuss one way you can grow in letting the “light” of the gospel shine in our city this week.

## SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION:

Mark 4:20

## PRAY TOGETHER