

## INTRODUCTION

### SCRIPTURE

Mark 4:1-34

#### Bottom Line:

1. Jesus is speaking in parables (v. 2, 33, 34).

A parable is an \_\_\_\_\_ story with a \_\_\_\_\_ meaning.

Its purpose is to \_\_\_\_\_ and to \_\_\_\_\_ (v 11-12).

Why? Because an \_\_\_\_\_ heart will receive more and more of God's truth; a \_\_\_\_\_ heart, less and less (v. 24-25).

2. The Parable of the Sower: Four "soils" of the human heart (v. 3-9, 13-20).

A \_\_\_\_\_, callous heart (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

An \_\_\_\_\_, superficial heart (1 John 2:19).

A \_\_\_\_\_, overinvolved heart (1 John 2:15-17).

A \_\_\_\_\_, receptive heart (John 15:8).

Are you listening? A Kingdom heart is a \_\_\_\_\_ heart.

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3. The Parable of the Lamp (v. 21-25).

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4. The Parable of the Growing Seed (v. 26-29).

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Community Group Curriculum  
For the week of February 2, 2014  
"Parables of the Kingdom"  
Mark 4:1-34

**BIG PICTURE**

In chapter 4 Jesus begins to shift His teaching to those who followed Him most closely. He was no doubt aware that many who followed Him were more interested in His healing ministry and anti-establishment tone than in the meaning of His message. For this reason Jesus began to concentrate on developing the faith of His disciples, spending less time with the crowds and more with the Twelve and other close followers. In line with this, He began to use parables as a teaching device. These simple stories which contained profound truths made it important for His audience to listen very carefully and ponder the meaning of His words. So let us now ponder chapter 4!

**LET'S DIG IN!**

1. **Group Question:** Mark Twain once said, "It's not the parts of the Bible I don't understand that bother me, but the parts I do understand!" Which parts of the Bible bother you more – the parts you understand or the parts you don't? Why?

2. Read Mark 4:1-9

Who is the farmer? What is the seed?

Path =

Rocky =

Thorny =

Good =

According to the passage, how are we to respond to the word in order to be fruitful? Having "ears to hear" (v. 9) involves what actions?

3. Ready Mark 4:10-20

How did those close to Jesus respond to the parables (v. 10)? What about the crowds in general?

Jesus explained the "secret" only to His disciples and not to the crowds in general (v. 11). Why did He do this?

Jesus regarded the parable of the sower as the key to interpreting all of the other parables (v. 13). What is the central idea it conveys? The disciples exhibit "hard hearts" in not understanding (Mark 8:17-18). What causes a "hard heart" and what is needed to change the heart?

According to Jesus, what are some obstacles which prevent people from accepting the gospel (vv. 16-19)? How should we feel toward someone who refuses to believe in Christ after we have personally witnessed to him/her?

4. Read Mark 4:21-25

Who or what does the “lamp” (v. 21) represent? When do you think the “hidden” (i.e. the full light of the lamp) will be revealed (v. 22)?

“Measure” (v. 24) refers to the attitude with which the word of Jesus is being received. What is the result if the hearer embraces Jesus’ message?

5. Read Mark 4:26-29

Compare Mark 4:28 with 1 Corinthians 3:6-7. In your own words, what is our job? What is God’s job?

6. Read Mark 4:30-34

Why do you think Jesus spoke only in parables to the crowds at this point in His ministry (v. 33)?

What does Mark 4:33-34 teach that might help you in sharing the gospel with nonbelievers?

7. **Group Question:** If Jesus Christ had been sent to earth during our generation, how do you think He would have chosen to tell us His message?

### **PRAYER PLEASE**

- Pray for our church as we continue “40 Days of Prayer.”
- Ask Him to do what no other can do; make a complete change in our hearts and lives.
- Pray for deliverance from evil for yourself, family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and even enemies.
- Ask God to give you excellence in your service to the Kingdom of God.

### **KEY DEFINITION**

**Parable** – Comes from the Greek *parabole*, which signifies something which is “set alongside” something else in order to make a comparison between the two. The parables of Jesus come in many forms, including stories, riddles and even jokes. In each case Jesus talks about something with which His listeners are familiar, then “sets it alongside” the spiritual truth He seeks to communicate.

The parables in Mark 4:1-34 all center around the theme of the Kingdom of God. Some key points about parables:

1. A parable is designed to communicate one central truth.
2. The one central truth of a parable often calls for a response.
3. Since a parable refers to events and experiences familiar to its original audience, the modern-day interpreter must know something of the culture back then to grasp the full impact of the message.
4. The parables are not “eternal truths” but rather teaching devices addressed to specific situations.
5. A parable seeks to communicate truth indirectly. In so doing it requires the listener to ponder the meaning of the story rather than giving the meaning directly.