

The Parable of the Sower

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[0 : 00] Please take your Bibles and turn to Matthew chapter 13.

! My name is Evan George and I'm a member of this local church. It's my joy to get to open up the scriptures with you tonight. If you're a guest here, welcome. Thank you for joining your Sunday night with us.

Earlier this week, my son Luke and I were tending to our front yard. We have this great big tree that provides great shade and relief from the heat, especially in Oklahoma in what is now August. But underneath this tree, there is some bare soil. There are, we have grass throughout the yard, but in these places, there isn't much grass. There are a handful of weeds and somehow some rocks, I think, brought in by my son, most likely, as well as his little footsteps all throughout the ground, trampling a lot of it down.

And so there's no grass. So what we've been doing recently is taking a generous amount of grass seed. And those may be funded solely by our purchasing of grass seed.

[1 : 19] But tossing all this grass seed in this area, and what's interesting is some of the seed seems to have taken root and produced grass.

In some of the areas, there's no grass. There's no fruit. And so this is the great George family agricultural endeavor of this summer, as well as our dilemma.

Why the different responses to the seed that was sown? So tonight, in our passage, we'll actually hear a well-known parable where Jesus tells of a sower who sows a different kind of seed and who receives varying and different responses to that seed.

So again, if you'll take your Bibles and look at Matthew chapter 13, I'm going to read verses 1 through 23 if you want to follow along. Verse 1, On that same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.

And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying, A sower went out to sow, and as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.

[2 : 34] Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away.

Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

He who has ears, let him hear. Then the disciples came and said to him, Why do you speak to them in parables? And he answered them, To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Indeed, in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says, You will indeed hear, but never understand, and you will indeed see, but never perceive. Verse 15. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes have closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.

[3 : 56] But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly I say to you, many prophets and righteous people long to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Verse 18. Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes, and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy. Yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word, and understands it. He indeed bears fruit, and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty. This evening we will see this emphasis.

[5 : 11] Though many reject the gospel, when understood, it yields immense fruit. Though many reject the gospel, when understood, it yields immense fruit.

We'll look briefly at verses one through seventeen, and then spend much of our time in Jesus' own explanation of this parable in verses eighteen through twenty, where we'll see four responses to the gospel.

So here we find ourselves in chapter thirteen of Matthew, right in the middle of the gospel of Matthew. This is the third major teaching section, or discourse section, of the gospel of Matthew. You have the Sermon on the Mount, in chapters five through seventeen, which Pastor Mike has been preaching through. Then you have chapter ten, where Jesus calls and sends out his disciples. And here you have chapter thirteen, where we see gospel, parables, Jesus speaking parables about the kingdom.

So here our text in verse one begins, with Jesus going out from the house, and sitting beside the sea, after he's been interacting with Pharisees, and scribes that day. And unsurprisingly, those Pharisees were rejecting him.

[6 : 20] Those scribes were rejecting him. But here all the crowds have come and gathered, because they want to hear Jesus speak. So Jesus gets in a boat, and he lets a little bit offshore to speak to them.

And then he begins to speak, what will be a series of parables. Jesus uses imagery and illustrations that would be common to these people in their everyday life. And so he speaks of a sower who goes to sow seed.

The sower takes the seed, and he casts it out to disperse along the ground. And as he tosses it, the wind aids and carries that seed throughout the field. In Jesus' time, they did not have John Deere tractors.

Today, that's how most farmers would disperse and plant seeds. What we imagine when farmers go to plant, they have a large tractor with implements pulling behind, plowing the seed into the ground to plant it.

But here, in Jesus' time, they didn't have John Deere tractors, much to our surprise, likely. But so what they would do is they'd toss the seed, the wind would help scatter it, and then once it was on the ground, then they would go and plow it in.

[7 : 25] But because they toss it, and the wind carries it, what we find is that seed ends up in various places. And we see four of those, mentioned by Jesus here in verses 4 through 8. So we have the path.

Now in the field, there would be ground that was beaten down, hardened, and basically impenetrable. And that seed would land on top of it, and that path would have been hardened by people coming back and forth as they worked in the field.

The birds would have easily been able to spot that seed and eat it. Then we also see the rocky ground. In the field, there would be rocks on the surface and even right below the surface, rocks of varying size and formation.

And these rocks would take up space that prevented the seed from having adequate soil to develop deep roots. And so when harsh conditions come, that seed wouldn't endure.

But then you also see the thorns. In the field, there would be ground with thorns that would grow up and grow on top of and over what was sown. And it would choke it out such that that seed didn't yield fruit.

[8 : 30] It would fail. Last we see good, fertile soil where the seed would grow and yield an immense harvest. So after Jesus tells them this parable, presumably later in private, the disciples come to Jesus and they ask him, why do you speak in parables?

Earlier this summer, Pastor Mike opened our parable summer preaching series by teaching on these very verses in verses 10 through 17. I want to make sure we understand them as they are incorporated into our passage.

So remember Pastor Mike taught us that Jesus speaks in parables to communicate spiritual truths and spiritual realities. And even more than that, through parables, Jesus both conceals the message from those who are hard-hearted and reject his teaching, and Jesus reveals the message to those who respond positively to his teaching.

So Jesus is both concealing information and revealing information through parables. Look again at verse 10. And the disciples came and said to him, why do you speak in parables?

Why do you speak to them in parables? And then he answered, to you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance.

[9 : 54] But from the one who is not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Jesus then continues in verse 14 to speak of a prophecy of Isaiah that was fulfilled in their hearing. In verse 14, indeed in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says, you'll indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.

For this people's heart has grown dull, with their ears they can barely hear, with their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.

These people are hard-hearted. They don't want to listen to Jesus' message, what is called here the word of the kingdom, or what we might call the gospel.

These hard-hearted people don't want to see who Jesus is. They don't want to hear his message. They don't want to believe in their hearts what Jesus is proclaiming. They've rejected God's message and God's messenger.

[11 : 01] So with that background, we turn now to Jesus' own explanation in verses 18 through 23. What we'll see is four responses to the gospel. First, we'll see denial.

Second, we'll see disbelief. Third, we'll see distraction. And fourth, we'll see discernment. So denial, disbelief, distraction, and discernment.

So the first response there in verse 19, denial. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. Again, the hearer does not understand the message. His heart is hardened to the message, just like that trampled down and hardened path.

The seed of Jesus' message does not penetrate. It doesn't yield fruit in this hearer's life because the hearer has denied Jesus of his own volition, of his own choosing. He's chosen to reject God.

[12 : 06] But if we step back for a moment, we think of Romans chapter 3, verse 10 through 12. Paul writes, As it is written, no one is righteous. No, not one. No one understands.

No one seeks after God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one. Paul references what David has written at different locations in the Psalms that no one is righteous.

No one does good. No one understands. And what's interesting is Paul uses that same word, the same Greek word for understand in Romans chapter 3 that Jesus uses here in this parable. knowing and understanding are granted, not earned.

They're given. They're not found. But what we also see is that the evil one comes and snatches away the seed. The reality is there's an invisible enemy who seeks to steal, kill, and destroy.

[13 : 08] He stands in direct rebellion and rejection of God and doesn't want this message to be heard or believed. He doesn't want this good news that Jesus, the Son of God, has come so that those who would trust in him and his message by faith would be forgiven of their sin and restored to a right relationship with God.

Satan desires that that good news not be understood by others. And that may sound strange, but whether we're aware or not is no concern of the enemy of Satan.

If you're here tonight and you don't consider yourself to be a Christian, I'd ask you to consider this, friend. If you lived in a land with a good king and he had good news to proclaim to the people, but there was an evil enemy who worked night and day such that that message might not be heard or

spread or believed, wouldn't that make you think that message might be worth considering? That message might be worth investigating or entertaining even for a moment. Friend, Jesus has an open invitation, open arms for you if you would turn to him by faith today.

So the first response here we see denial. The second response we see is disbelief. Verses 20 and 21. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.

[14:39] Yet he has no root in himself but endures for a while. And when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, he immediately falls away. Jesus tells us that this person is the one who hears the gospel and immediately responds positively with great joy to that message.

but as soon as difficulty, as soon as persecution, as soon as trial or tribulation come, they fall away. They reject Jesus. There's disbelief.

They don't believe that Jesus or his message are worth enduring hardship or persecution. Now what might that look like? As I was thinking about this, what came to mind were the Israelites in Exodus and Numbers.

So remember, the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. They were under great oppression. And the Lord mightily delivered them out of Egypt. He mightily brought them out, powerfully delivering them.

And this is what they write in Exodus 14. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians. And Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians.

[15:51] So the people feared the Lord and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses. Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord saying, I will sing to the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously.

The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song and he has become my salvation. This is my God and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. That's the response of the Israelites when the Lord brings them out through the Red Sea and they see God's mighty, good, gracious, powerful hand at work. So they respond positively to the Lord with great joy.

But I think we can all think of not there shortly long after multiple examples where there seems to be disbelief. One particularly would be when they come to the land and the spies are sent to spy out the promised land the Lord was going to give them in Numbers 13 and 14.

So the spies go, they look at the land for 40 days, they see that the land is fruitful and fertile and glorious and they come back. But at the same time what they see is what appears to be strong, fortified inhabitants.

[16:58] So they're afraid. How do they respond to difficulty? They turn away from the Lord, they fall away. This is Numbers 14, verses 2 and 3. And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

The whole congregation said to them, would that we had died in the land of Egypt or would that we had died in the wilderness. Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword?

Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt? So they're rife with disbelief. Rife with disbelief.

Hear what the Lord says in response a few verses later. And the Lord said to Moses, how long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me?

In spite of all the signs that I've done among them? How long will they not believe? This person of rocky soil responds immediately with joy, but as soon as hardship comes or persecution is there, oppression, opposition comes, he falls away.

[18:08] Sadly, many of us can think of friends or family members, loved ones, and this is their story. A teenager or student, if I could speak to you a little bit more specifically, this is what often happens I think to youth today is they hear the gospel, there's an immediate response of great joy, but soon we realize there's no change.

Externally, it seemed like there was genuine faith only for them to return living like the rest of the world because they do not truly believe. This rocky ground would also describe those who have walked an aisle, maybe said a prayer, or even been baptized only to end up bearing no fruit of repentance or belief because difficulty came and they turned away from God.

Hear this, Christian brother and sister. When we encounter suffering and hardship, we will be tempted to turn away and reject God.

We'll be tempted to walk away altogether in disbelief. But remember what the scriptures say. 2 Timothy 3.12 tells us that indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. So we shouldn't be surprised when persecution comes. If we look at Philippians chapter 1 verse 29, for it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.

[19 : 37] We should not be surprised when suffering for Jesus comes. And did you hear, did you catch how Paul speaks of that suffering? For it has been granted to you.

I don't know about you but I've never received a grant for something bad. We don't speak of grants in the negative context. And so it's clear that Paul is saying it is a great joy and a gift and a privilege that you get to suffer for Christ.

I think it combats a lie that we often believe. God doesn't work in spite of suffering. God often works through suffering. Suffering is often the means.

When we rightly endure hardship for the sake of Christ, we live in a way that gets to communicate that we treasure and value and believe that Jesus is better than anything that we would gain by denying him.

suffering. It is in suffering that we truly get to say Jesus is better than anything and everything else. Better than health, better than friends, better than wealth, better than an Olympic gold medal, better than the absence of pain or our very life if following Jesus costs us ours here.

[21 : 00] So I ask you, friend, do you yield in the midst of difficulty? Do you flee from Christ when life is hard or when believing Jesus costs you something?

Brother and sister, I encourage you to hold fast to Christ. Paul assures us that for those who know Christ, Christ has begun the work, is sustaining the work, and will bring the work to completion.

I think of Philippians 1.6, and I'm sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. Hold fast to Christ, for Christian, he is holding fast to you, holding you fast in the midst of tribulation and suffering.

He's not distant, he's near. So that's our second response. Here's the third response, verse 22, distraction. So the third response, distraction.

As for it was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. If the second response address the challenge of difficulties in our life, then this third response speaks to the difficulties or the challenge of prosperity in our life, of success in our life.

[22 : 24] This person hears the word and responds, but gradually over time, weeds grow up, or thorns grow up, and that would be the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and they overtake the hearer.

This person is distracted and not primarily concerned with the gospel or with following the Lord, but instead is focused on this world.

back in 2016, I just graduated high school and was at a pre-college retreat. So there was a group that I was going to be part of on campus, and so we went up for a few days, and we had a lot of fun, it was great.

The last night, being the incredibly wise students that we were, we decided to try and stay up all night. Clearly a great idea. The kicker was that we all had to drive home the next morning, and for me, that meant a three-hour car ride alone.

So, obviously a very wise decision. As I drove home that morning, at first I started off, it was going pretty well, I was running on caffeine and excitement from this trip, you know, college is almost here.

[23 : 36] But as I continued to drive, I found myself getting a little bit more tired, a little bit more tired. I found myself more and more distracted by this overwhelming desire to sleep.

continued to drive, continued to drive, and the next thing I remember is opening my eyes to realize that I had collided with something. When I realized what was going on and I came to, I realized that I had struck a road sign on the right side of the vehicle, and in my rearview mirror I could see that there was a vehicle, it was a two-lane road, and a vehicle had passed me, and so I could see in my rearview mirror back to the left.

So praise God that I went right and hit a sign rather than going left, which would have likely resulted in a head-on collision. Many people hear the gospel and even positively respond only to live their lives asleep at the wheel.

Not focused on Christ, not bearing fruit, but instead distracted by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. These people find themselves focused on progressing their career or getting that raised or being the best at sports, making the team, making sure your kids are the best, or making sure you have enough money and assets to retire, getting that project or the to-do list completed.

These people are so caught up in the cares of the world, which means they're not actually, they're only concerned about earthly matters, they're not concerned whatsoever about heavenly matters. They're distracted by the temporal and blind to the eternal.

[25 : 19] They take neutral or even good things, like it's a really great thing to want to do well at your job to the glory of God, right? But when we take that and we elevate it above God or whatever that thing is, if we elevate it such that it matters more than Jesus, then we're completely distracted.

That's by definition idolatry. Jesus also mentions here the deceitfulness of riches. So by riches we could think of wealth, assets, money, property.

Here they would have very much considered livestock as well. But what might be deceitful about riches? I think what Jesus is getting at here is that no matter how much we have, we're tempted to think that if I had a little bit more, it would solve, fill in the blank.

If I had a little bit more, I would be happy. If I had a little bit more, that would be a little bit more security. I'd provide hope for when bad things happen. Having more will solve this problem or prevent this.

And we sum up all of those answers. We sum up all of that. What we get is wealth will satisfy the deepest needs, longings, and desires of my heart. Please listen, brethren, sister.

[26 : 41] Wealth will not be your savior. Only Jesus truly saves and satisfies. The prospect of having wealth and getting more and more will deceive you and lead you not to worship Jesus, not to trust Jesus, but instead to worship and trust earthly wealth.

And don't mishear me. There's nothing inherently sinful about being wealthy. We see that Job was incredibly wealthy and described as a righteous man. But if we end up trusting and worshiping wealth, if wealth is our God, if riches are our God, it will only lead to death and pain and destruction in our lives.

You cannot serve both God and money. And a pastor hopefully pointed this out, that the scary part of this is most of us think we're not susceptible. Because if you asked us, most of us wouldn't say that we're rich.

Right? Like if we all just raised our hands, if we thought we were rich, how many of us would actually raise our hands? Probably not many. But I think you'd be interested in why I did a little bit of research.

And if your household pre-tax income is around \$60,000, you rank in about the 90th percentile of earners in the world. So if your household income is around \$60,000 across the world, that puts you at about the 90th percentile.

[27 : 59] And I say that just to demonstrate that I think we're probably much better off and much richer from a worldly sense than much of us realize in the affluent West. And so no matter what amount you do or do not have, this is a warning for us that we are susceptible to being discontent with what the Lord has entrusted to us and what we have, believing that having more will make us content.

But the problem with that is the only thing that will ever make us truly content is Jesus. True contentment is only found in him. So friend, I ask you, is there anything distracting you from following Jesus the way you ought to?

As I wrestle with that question this week, what really came to mind was a new job that I'd recently started. I've got to talk to some of you about it. Yeah, certainly there's a desire, a good desire to want to honor the Lord and do it well to the glory of him.

But what I found is an increasing desire to dedicate more and more time to it. I've had moments where choices arise and, you know, seemingly small compromises.

I'm tempted with those. So for example, earlier this week we had finished dinner and that's typically when we take, we read a chapter of a storybook Bible with our son Luke at the dinner table.

[29 : 20] And so when we had finished dinner, I was really in conflict with this decision of, you know, do I stay here or do I let Hannah read to Luke and then let Hannah, you know, clean up dinner while I go do more work?

What wonderful husbandry, right? What considerate husbanding. But just as I gradually fell asleep at the wheel and just like the thorns gradually grow over and choke out the seed in our parable here, so too to the distraction of this world.

We don't initially set out to be consumed by them, but little by little they slowly and gradually overtake us. But we see the end result is that the seeds choked out, it fails, it doesn't bear fruit. So again, I ask, friend, is there anything distracting you from following Jesus and bearing the fruit, bearing fruit the way you ought to? Ask the Lord to reveal that to you. If you've spent the last 20 minutes thinking about something other than Christ, that may reveal that you're distracted from Christ.

And the subjects of the things that you've been thinking about, that might very be, might well very be the distraction that you have in your life. Is there something that's distracting you from regularly communing with God through reading his word in prayer?

[30 : 47] Is there something that is regularly preventing you from gathering with or serving in the local church? Men, is there anything in your life that's keeping you, that's distracting you from loving Jesus, loving your wife, leading your family or shepherding your kids to the glory of God the way you ought to?

Is there anything distracting? Ask the same thing to the women. Is there anything that is distracting you from loving Jesus or if you're married, loving your husband or submitting to his leadership as to the Lord?

Or if you have kids, shepherding your kids to the glory of God the way that you ought? Students, teenagers, is there anything distracting you from following Jesus?

video games, sports? I'm not saying you can't ever do any of those things, but if you do think that they are distracting you from Jesus, talk to your parents.

Ask them how you might be able to focus more on Christ in those activities. For us as a church, we must be on guard against these distractions that come in. We cannot get distracted by attendance numbers or statistics or anything else that might take away our focus from Christ.

[32 : 04] So we're called to be on guard both in the church and individually so that these thorns don't grow up and overtake us. Alas, we move to our fourth and final response, discernment.

Verse 23. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundred fold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.

So we've seen three responses so far, all of them ended in rejection of Jesus. But here, we see a different response. Across these, you have the same sower, the same seed, but different soils and different conditions of the heart.

Here we learn of a fundamentally different response to the gospel. This person hears the gospel and understands it such that it bears immense fruit. And we know that this kind of heart change can't be done on our own.

Ezekiel chapter 11 speaks of this change. And I will give them one heart and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them.

[33 : 19] And they shall be my people and I will be their God. God, this here understands. What does it mean to understand? Technically speaking, to understand means to take in this information and piece it together and perceive it such that you believe it.

And that results in thinking, acting, and proceeding in accordance with that belief. In short, to understand the gospel means that you believe the gospel. And Lord willing, this is you and me. This is the soil that we hope to be by God's grace. So you believe that Jesus is the Son of God. You believe that he came to redeem and restore those who are dead in their sins through his sacrificial life and death.

You believe that he did not stay dead, but he resurrected, demonstrating that he was victorious over sin, death, and Satan. You believe that he ascended to the right hand of the Father where he now intercedes on our behalf.

And you believe that he will one day return, and we will be with him forever in glory. This person understands the gospel, which yields immense fruit.

[34 : 30] This belief results in an outward visible works and obedience to Christ. And these would certainly be thoughts, desires, and actions in accordance with what we see in Galatians 5.

You know, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And included in this fruit that these people bear is certainly the casting of seed to others, to sharing this message that they have received with others.

We're called to spread the gospel. We share the gospel with anybody and everybody. We do not know the condition of their heart. We do not know what soil they are. And so we, like the sower, generously cast seed out.

For if we try to predict or determine who might receive, truly receive the gospel, truly receive this message, if we were to try and make that calculation, then the reality is nobody would have shared it with us.

So just as the sower sows, we sow seeds generously, consistently, year after year. And there are people in our lives who are described by the first three responses we see tonight.

[35 : 48] They've denied the gospel, they've ended in disbelief, or they've just been distracted. And I want to encourage you to keep telling them about Jesus. For you, it may be a spouse, it may be a parent, it may be a child.

It may be a co-worker, a sibling, or a friend, or a neighbor. As I think about this, I think of a friend that I have at work that I've been sharing the gospel with for more than four years now, and he does not understand.

He doesn't believe. And I know that many of you have been sharing with people like that for decades. And it's easy to get discouraged. It's easy to say, to give up, to say enough is enough. They're not going to believe. Don't be discouraged. Keep sharing the gospel. Keep praying for them. We sow with confidence.

Because Jesus assures us here that his word is powerful, and that it will be received by some and bear immense fruit. In addition, believer, keep hearing and trusting the word of God.

[36 : 56] So, like you received it the first day and believed, continue to believe. Continue to seek to hear and trust and respond to God's word. In your personal time, prioritize Bible intake.

Prioritize communing with God on a regular basis in his scriptures. Continue to seek to make time to come for the regular preaching of God's word with the local body.

Come even prepared for that. Plan on Saturday so that when you hear the word, you can better respond and better hear on Sunday. Plan your Saturday so that you can come adequately rested.

Plan to be able to take notes or coffee or whatever works best for you to listen to the sermon. Read the scripture with others, with your spouse or with your family.

Be in the word together. You could even look at memorizing scripture together. In addition, we have a number of groups in our local church dedicated to studying God's word together and applying it to their lives.

[38 : 03] So we think of Sunday school classes, men's and women, discipleship classes that are about to start up, or even community group, which sign ups are out there. In those groups, there are many ways to continue hearing the gospel.

But we must conclude. So as you consider those four responses to the gospel, denial, disbelief, distraction, and discernment, which of them best describes you?

Which soil are you? Have you continued to deny Jesus' message? Have you fallen away from Jesus and find yourself walking in disbelief?

Have you become distracted and overwhelmed by the things of the world? If so, pray to Jesus and ask him to help you understand and truly believe the gospel.

Truly believe his word. And after we dismiss, I'd encourage you to come talk to one of the elders or me. We'd love to talk with you more about what it means to believe Jesus' message.

[39 : 10] And finally, if you understand Jesus' message, you've been granted that discernment, praise God. Keep bearing fruit. Keep sowing seed.

Keep hearing the gospel as the spirit enables, such that Christ will be magnified in our lives more and more. Let's pray. Amen. Lord, we are thankful for your word.

We're thankful for the redemptive work that you have done and are doing in our lives. Lord, we ask that you'd help us to see, to hear, and to believe your gospel more and more.

There's never a day that will grow too mature for the gospel. Lord, we constantly need you. Apart from you, we can do nothing.

Father, we pray that you'd bring about fruit in our lives. It would bring people to praise you. Father, we pray all these things in Jesus' name.

[40 : 15] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
you