

# THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

**Biblical Passages:** Mark 4:3-20

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Imagine trying to plant anything to grow on a concrete path. Or, try to imagine going out to a rock quarry and trying to get a garden to grow on a mound of rocks. Sound impossible? It very nearly is, because there is little rich, fertile soil available for the plants to grow in. Now, try to imagine planting gardenia bushes in the middle of encroaching thorny plants. Even if the plant ever flowered, you'd have difficulty getting close enough to even smell the gardenia blossoms, much less be able to pick them. The thorns would make the gardenia bush almost impossible to get to. Plants depend upon the soil and the conditions in which they've been planted to survive, much less flourish.

Read Mark 4:3-20. Jesus told a parable about a farmer scattering seed that fell on a variety of soils. Some soil was hard, packed down by people walking over it. Any seed that fell there would struggle to break into the soil to germinate and then grow. Some soil was so rocky that seed might find enough ground to germinate, but wouldn't develop strong roots because the soil was too shallow. Some soil was thorny. The thorns would choke the life out of any plant as it began to grow. And, some soil was good, and seed planted there had a good chance for survival.

The soils Jesus described can also be understood as various conditions of people's hearts. Jesus (the sower) delivers God's Word (the seed) to all people. Some are hard-hearted and resistant to the Word of God. Some accept God's Word initially, but when life gets rocky, they walk away from God altogether. Some accept God's Word, but allow the pull of the world to choke out their spiritual dependence upon God. And some hear God's Word and believe it, and live according to it—they flourish spiritually.

## CONNECTION QUESTIONS

1. What success has your family had in gardening? Have you battled poor soil, rocky conditions, and thorns? Is so, did you give up on gardening or did you find a way of growing plants or flowers successfully?
2. When you think about the types of soil Jesus described, which soil do you think your life reflects?
3. As family members decide: Which of the following best describes your life as a believer: Having a desire for the things of God? Having an initial joy in God that doesn't last when things get tough? Struggling to let go of things that the world says are important so you can depend upon God? Having a faith that is growing and maturing?