

The Power of Preparation

Guided Growth with Pastor Keith @ CBC Sunday, April 30th

The Bible reveals Spiritual principles to help guide us to God and His plans. These include: The Passion (Open Heart) Principle (Col. 3:16-24); The Purpose (Open Hand) Principle (Ex. 3,4); The Path (Open Door) Principle (Rev. 3:7-13); The Preparation (seed) Principle (Mt 13:3-30) Jesus used seed/harvest principles to illustrate the importance of what we allow in the soil of our souls. (Pr. 4:20-23) **Sources of Seed in our lives include:** God (*good seed*) Mt 13:24; Satan (*bad seed*) Mt. 13:25; and ourselves and/or others (*Planting Selfish Seed*) Gal. 5:16-21.

Last week we saw learned that Harvest Principles reveal we will reap:

What we sow (Ga. 6:7,8); After we Sow (Gal. 6:9); and More than we sow (Mt 13:8,9; Hosea 8:7)! We closed last week by reminding ourselves that there's a limited season for preparing, planting, protecting and harvesting that which we sow. (Eccl. 3:1-11)

If we don't prepare the soil, the seed won't be able to Penetrate, Germinate, or Propagate. (Mt. 13:18-22)

Isn't it interesting how weeds can thrive anywhere and without any intentional preparation/effort;

But good seed requires "good ground" (Mt 13:8) in order to produce a healthy, fruitful crop.

If we fail to intentionally prepare our hearts, even if they're exposed to God's "good seed",

It will have trouble taking root and bearing fruit.

2 Chr. 12:14 Rehoboam: "*did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.*"

Contrast this with his grandfather David: Ps. 119:10 "*With my whole heart have I sought thee...*"

Or Ezra who "*had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD...*" Ezra 7:10

In order to prepare the soil of our souls, we must learn how to Plow or Soften our hearts.

Hosea 10:12 "*...break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD...*"

What makes a heart hard?

1. Hearts (*like soil*) can grow hard through repeated use (Exposure)

"Wayside" in Mt 13:4 (hodos') means a path (*ground that's been packed hard by foot/cart traffic.*)

It was so hard that even God's "good seed" couldn't penetrate it. (Mt 13:4,19)

A. We can become so "familiar" with something (or someone) that we fail to recognize their value.

1) Familiarity may not always breed contempt, *but it often produces lack of honor / receptivity.*

a) After raising Jairus' daughter from the dead, (Mk 5) notice Jesus' reception in Nazareth in Mk 6!

b) Luke 4:14-32 records this strange phenomenon as well.

2) This is equally true in our marriages and/or ministries; *Particularly if what they say & want challenges us. Luke 9:43-46 "let these sayings sink down into your ears..."*

B. Many have become inoculated (desensitized) to the gospel.

1) Familiarity is not the same as *faith!*

a) There's a significant difference between being conscious of *and committed to truth.* (2Tim 3:15)

2) Knowing the scriptures doesn't save us, they (the law) condemn us! (Ro 7:7; Gal. 2:16)

a) They reveal our need of salvation, *and reveal God's provision for it.* (Gal. 3:24; Jn 5:39,40)

3) Jesus' ministry was to spiritually educated people who were spiritually blind! Mt 13:14-15

2. Hearts can also grow hard (numb/embittered) through disappointment

and/or abuse. Pr 13:12 *"Hope deferred makes the heart sick,..."*

A. Satan seeks to use past disappointments to hinder/sabotage future faith (trust).

- 1) He knows your past better than you do.
- 2) He's the "accuser of the brethren" Rev. 12:10

B. Broken hearts may mend eventually, but:

- 1) They're easily infected. (Heb. 12:15) *"bitterness"* (pikria: to cut {pierce} and poison)
- 2) They often scar (harden). (Heb 3:7-13) *"To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, ... take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil (poneros': infected) heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened (sklērȳn'ō: stubborn) through the deceitfulness of sin."* (See 1 Sam. 15:23)

C. Jesus came to heal the broken hearted. (Is. 61:1-3) *"the LORD anointed me to preach good tidings*

unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, (Shabar' leb: crushed, hurt, quenched) to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;... To give them beauty for ashes... joy for mourning, The garment of praise for heaviness. That they might be called trees of righteousness, ..."

- 1) The Woman with the issue of blood for 12 years. Mk 5
- 2) The Father of the demonized son. Mark 9:21-24 *"but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father ... cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."*
- 2) The man at the pool of Bethesda. Jn 5:5-16

Conclusion:

Hard hearts are unreceptive to God's Truth. Hearts can grow hard through:

- Repeated exposure and/or use. (Familiarity without Faithful obedience)
- Repeated Pain and disappointments can numb and/or embittered a heart.

This was Satan's goal in Job! Job 1:11; 2:4,5 *"put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."*

Application:

Has your heart grown hard or numb through:

- Information without Application?
- Repeated Disappointments without Explanation?

God is not done with you! Jer 29:11-14

He's trying to motivate you to grow roots of faith that can survive the heat. Mt 13:21

1 Sam. 13:14 reveals that God is seeking *"a man after His heart."*

He found such a man in David! (Ps 9:1; Ps 111:1; Ps 119:10; Ps 119:34; Ps 119:58; Ps 119:145)

God's still looking for such. John 4:23 *"the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."*

Are you willing to become a "whole hearted?" Christian?