

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

Type of Soil	Internal Condition	External Condition	Group of People Represented
Hard Path	Lack of understanding, unreceptive to faith	Birds (the enemy) come and steal away the seed before it ever sinks in	The Sadducees and Pharisees
Rocky Soil	No depth of heart, seed can't sink any roots	The sun (trial, persecution) comes and the plant withers	The Crowds
Thorny Soil	The seed takes root, but grows up alongside thorns and weeds, which choke off growth	The plant gets choked off by the thorns (the cares of the world and the delight in riches) and can't bear fruit	The Crowds
Good Soil	The seed sinks in and takes root, and the plant grows	The plant bears fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold	The Disciples, followers of Jesus

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Can I relate to any of these various types of soil from my own experience, past or present? How?
- 2) How might God be convicting me about what needs to change in my heart?

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Enemy	Effect	Can you think of how these things separate us from Jesus?
The World	Busyness, Distractions	
	Legitimate responsibilities – homes, jobs, families, involvements, etc.	
	Noise – TV, technology, activities, entertainment, etc.	
	Secular mentality	
The Flesh	Excessive value on our own comfort and ease	
	Neglecting prayer, skipping Mass	
	Temptations – food, entertainment, sexuality, etc.; not mastering our passions and becoming enslaved to them	
The Devil	The enemy of our human nature, because he literally makes us “less human” with every sin he tempts us to	
	He looks for the “weak places” in us and there he tempts us	

Discussion Questions:

1. How have I experienced these “enemies” myself?
2. Is there a particular area where I seem to be more vulnerable? A “weak place” where the enemy seems to be tempting me? How could I strengthen that area?

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**LEADER
TIPS**

Take time for the group to share about the various things that God provides to assist, and the ways that we can respond to what God is providing.

What God provides	God's Life – grace; given first in baptism, and offered again and again through the Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist and Reconciliation
	The invitation to relationship with Him, experienced primarily through the gift of prayer
	The Holy Spirit, active in our relationship with God and in our experience of prayer
	The sacred Scriptures; the teachings of the Church and study of our faith
	The experience of community with other believers
Ways we can respond	Giving of our time – for prayer, for Church, for study, for service and love of others, etc.
	Growing in virtue in our life, tempering vice; rooting out sin in our lives, particularly regular sin and sinful habits
	Detachment from the things that can separate us from God – money, possessions, simple pleasures, etc.
	Special encouragement for parents – greater intentionality and vigilance in raising holy children

TAKEHOME SHEET

Participant Handout - Additional Prayer Experiences

1. Take a prayer hike outdoors, where you will be surrounded by things that are growing, living. Invite the Lord to walk with you and speak into your heart about how he is desiring you to grow and be more alive. Let the content of this study be in the backdrop as you take this time to pray. Talk with Jesus about all you learned, and what ways you feel called to respond to what he has taught you.
2. One of the times the Parable of the Sower appears in the Mass readings schedule, it is coupled with Isaiah 55 as the Old Testament reading. Take time to prayerfully read Isaiah 55:10-13.

Questions to prayerfully reflect on: This message from Isaiah gives us great hope. God's word, which we can also think of as the "seed of faith" from all we have heard from the Parable of the Sower, never goes forth and returns empty, or void. "It shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

3. How have I seen the seed of faith (God's word) bear fruit in my life over time? How has that seed of faith had effect despite the condition of the soil of my heart? What kind of hope does this give me for other areas in my life?
4. There is a good article on the Parable of the Sower on Aletia.org. The link to the article is: <https://aleteia.org/2017/07/15/how-the-parable-of-the-sower-can-change-your-life/>
5. Take time to prayerfully read the article and meditate on the questions at the end of the article:
 - How does reading the Parable of the Sower as a call to conversion challenge you?
 - What are signs that the Word of God has taken root and is growing inside a person?
 - How is the Word of God "alive and active" in the Church? In you?

TAKEHOME SHEET

6. Pope Francis developed a beautiful prayer for Young people and Vocations. Take time this week to very intentionally join your prayers to those of the Holy Father and pray for young people. Make your prayer specific and personal if possible and pray for the young people in your own parish community, offering this prayer up for them:

LORD OF THE HARVEST,

BLESS young people with the gift of courage to respond to your call. Open their hearts to great ideals, to great things.

INSPIRE all of your disciples to mutual love and giving—for vocations blossom in the good soil of faithful people.

INSTILL those in religious life, parish ministries, and families with the confidence and grace to invite others to embrace the bold and noble path of a life consecrated to you.

UNITE us to Jesus through prayer and sacrament, so that we may cooperate with you in building your reign of mercy and truth, of justice and peace.

AMEN.