

LifeGroups

“Cross-Shaped Response”

Mark 4:1-20

Welcome back to UPC's study of the book of Mark entitled “The Cross-Shaped Life.” We hope you are finding these weekly sermon discussion questions to be a helpful tool to reflect on and apply what you hear from the pulpit on Sunday mornings.

This week's main point: *How do you respond to Jesus and the gospel? In Mark 4:1-20, Jesus tells a parable about four different kinds of soil. This parable functions like a mirror, revealing the way people respond to Jesus and the gospel. As you discuss the sermon this week, look closely at your own heart and ask which kind of soil it most resembles.*

Those who belong to the family of God know the "secret of the Kingdom." They acknowledge the authority of Jesus' teaching. To them Jesus explains the parables. They will bear fruit in their lives—growing into who God intends them to be. Those on the "outside" harden their hearts in response to the parables. They do not recognize the authority of Jesus' teaching. Those on the outside are not given explanations of the parables. They do not experience life change in keeping with God's purposes.

Which soil are you?

Share

Can you recall a time when a failure to listen got you into some kind of trouble?

Study

1. **Read Mark 4:1-20.**
2. *Make as many observations as you can about the details of the parable in vss. 1-9. Note the similarities and contrasts between “the seed” and “the soils.”*
3. *Thus far, Mark has told us about four different groups of people who have encountered Jesus: the crowds, the religious authorities, Jesus’ family members, and the disciples. How does this parable help to understand the response of these four different groups of people to Jesus and his message?*
4. *What is “the secret of the kingdom of God” (vs. 11)?*
5. *In vs. 13, Jesus indicates that the parable of the soils is foundational to understanding all his other parables. Why is that the case?*

See Jesus

1. *What is the central point of the parable of the soils?*
2. *In vs. 12, is Jesus discouraging people from hearing the Word of God, repenting, and seeking forgiveness? Why or why not?*
3. *What does Jesus mean by “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (vs. 9)?*
4. *What does it mean to you to be called a brother or sister of Jesus?*

Send

1. *How does this passage highlight the Christian’s battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil?*
2. *In light of the fact that discipleship means spiritual warfare, how should we treat each other? What would UPC look like if we really believed that the Christian life is a holy war against the world, the flesh, and the devil?*
3. *What is hindering you from bearing more fruit as a Christian? Identify those things that distract you from receiving the Word of God, throw you off course, or have captured your heart and taken Jesus’ place in your daily life.*

Supplicate

- ◆ *Pray for our mission of making disciples: ask God to strengthen our determination to see the kingdom advance through our proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*
- ◆ *Pray for our Welcome Team: ask God to use them to create a warm and inviting environment on Sunday morning.*
- ◆ *Pray for our Deacons: ask God to encourage and sustain them as they care for the hurting inside and outside our church.*
- ◆ *Pray for our church of the week: LifeSong Church*
- ◆ *Pray for our missionary of the week: Desiree & Logan Clark, USC Upstate*
- ◆ *Pray for our unreached people group of the week: Sindhi Sumra of Pakistan*