

## OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe that God really wants to have a conversation with you?
2. What do you imagine a two way conversation with God might be like?

## BIG IDEA

**A true apprentice of Jesus tends the soil of their heart, preparing it to receive God's word.**

## SCRIPTURE FOR TODAY

**Mark 4:1-20; James 3:7; John 13:13-16; Ephesians 5:18; James 1:2-4; Romans 8:28-39; Matthew 6:33; Galatians 5:22-26**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the ways that we can hear God's word? What role does the scripture play in our discernment of God's word from other sources?
2. Read Mark 4:1-13.
  - a. In one way the parables of Jesus help clarify His teaching. The use of familiar pictures makes the truth more accessible. In another way they raise unanswered questions. The unspoken applications of a parable invite us to make inquiries and seek out further insight as the disciples did in Mark 4:10. In what forms can God's word come to us? In what ways can we seek out further insight into God's words to us?
  - b. Why is it important that we hear God's words? This weekend we heard that "the eternal destiny of every person will be determined by their response to God's revelation of Himself. Those that receive and submit to God's word will be saved. Those that reject God's word will be lost." Do you agree with this statement? Are there ways that we can ensure that we receive God's word with faithful hearts?
3. Read Mark 4:14-20.
  - a. Mark 4:4, 15 **Hard Soil**. What are some things that can make the soil of our hearts hard? What are some ways that Satan can come and steal the word from us before it takes root? According to James 3:7, how can we counteract this work of Satan? According to John 16:13-16, what role does the Holy Spirit play in our hearing of God's word? Each day, do you ask to be filled with the Spirit? (Eph. 5:18)

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- b. Mark 4:5, 16-17 **Shallow Soil**. What are some of the problems and persecutions we could face that would cause our faith to wither and die? Why would problems and persecution have that effect? According to James 1:2-4, what should our response to trials be? How might an acceptance of God's great love for us help us put trouble in the right perspective? (Romans 8:28-39)
- c. Mark 4:7, 18-19 **Thorny Soil**. According to our passage, what are the thorns? Can you give examples of 'the worries of life', 'the lure of wealth', and 'the desire for other things'? How can we combat these things? (Matthew 6:33)
- d. Mark 4:8, 20 **Fertile Soil**. What do you believe a fruitful life would be? (Galatians 5:22-26)

### **THE KEY QUESTION & A CHALLENGE**

Each of the first 3 soils can become fertile if the apprentice of Jesus tends the soil of their heart. **Here is a question we can ask ourselves:** How is the yield of your heart? Is there fruit?

#### **Here is a challenge:**

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to respond to the word of God.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you fully receive the fact that you are loved by God.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you recognize when other things are choking out His word.

Tell God that you desire to submit to Him and bear fruit.

### **SPEND SOME TIME IN PRAYER**

Holy Spirit, what are you saying to me about the condition of the soil of my heart?