

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Teaching Plan
April 6, 2013
Hebrews 6:1-8
“Crops or Thorns?”

Memory Verse

“Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God.” Hebrews 6:7, NIV

The Big Idea:

Sermon Scripture: *Approach the Throne: Part 4 – Jesus Makes Us Blessed (Hebrews 6:4-20)*

Sunday School Scripture: Hebrews 6:1-8

Sunday School Title: *“Crops or Thorns?”*

ESS: To produce spiritual fruit useful for God’s kingdom, Christians must remain rooted in God’s word.

REVIEW: Last week, we talked about the differing qualities of the spiritually mature vs. the spiritually immature. In Hebrews chapter 5 & 6, what 2 word pictures did the author use to describe the mature and immature? (1. *food – milk vs. meat*; 2. *a building – the foundation vs. building higher*). From what we studied last week, how can we become more spiritually mature in our own lives?

This week, we’ll again study 2 different things being contrasted against one another. In Hebrews 6:7-8, the author discusses the difference between productive and worthless land.

Imagine you’re going to plant a garden. Describe the perfect spot you would pick. What would the conditions be like in that spot? On the other hand, what spot would *NOT* be ideal for your garden? What conditions would make this your spot your last choice?

READ Hebrews 6:7-8

2 Types of Land:

Notice that verses 7 & 8 discuss two different types of land. Look at these verses closely. Take a moment to list the qualities of each type of land. (*NOTE: A blank chart similar to the one below is in the Learner Guide. Give students a few minutes to fill it in on their own before discussing the answers.*)

Land in Verse 7:

Drinks in the rain

Produces a crop

Is useful for the farmer

Is blessed by God

Land in Verse 8:

Receives rain just like the other land

Produces thorns & thistles

Is worthless

Is cursed by God; will eventually be burned

Notice that both types of land described in Hebrews 6:7-8 receive the rain God provides, but the results differ. The land described in verse 7 “drinks in” the rain and puts the nourishment to good use. This land produces a crop, which profits the farmer. This land pleases God, and He blesses it. On the other hand, the land described in verse 8 doesn’t seem to profit from the rain God sends. It produces only thorns and thistles, which are useless. This land is cursed by God and will eventually be burned. So what can we learn from these 2 types of land?

1. Just like God provided rain for the land, He provides blessings for us.

READ Ephesians 1:3 and 2 Peter 1:3

According to these verses, in Christ, we have every spiritual blessing we could ever need. God has already equipped us with the blessings needed to live a life of godliness.

2. Just like the land exists to produce a crop, God expects Christians to bear spiritual fruit.

READ John 15:7-8 & 16

Jesus desires for us to bear spiritual fruit for God’s glory!

Give examples of spiritual fruit. (The fruits of the spirit listed Galatians 5:22-23; a life pleasing to God; loving God and others; witnessing to others; serving others; etc) What obstacles in life can prevent us from being fruitful?

3. Just like the land produces either fruit or thorns, Christians are either fruitful or barren.

Notice that only 2 types of land are discussed here – the useful and the worthless. The worth of the land is determined by the fruit it produces. Similarly, as Christians we are either fruitful or barren. We are either producing spiritual fruit for God’s Kingdom, or we’re producing worthless thorns and thistles. There’s no in-between.

Looking at your own life, are you producing spiritual fruit useful for God’s kingdom? Or are you only producing thorns and thistles that are worthless to God?

PRODUCING FRUIT

READ Matthew 13:1-8

In this parable, Jesus contrasts four different types of soil. The seed planted in each is the same, but it’s the soil that makes the difference. Three of the four types of soil produce a less than desirable crop. Let’s see what we can learn from each type of soil:

READ Matthew 13:18-23

WE CANNOT BE FRUITFUL WHEN WE ARE:

1. Unsaved

In Matthew 13:19, Jesus explains that the first type of soil along the path failed to produce fruit because the seed never took root. Before the soil was ready to receive and nourish the seed, Satan stole the seed. Similarly, those who hear the gospel but are unsaved cannot produce spiritual fruit.

2. Immature

In Matthew 13:20-21, Jesus explains that the seed in the second type of soil fell among rocks. Though the crop sprouted, it soon withered when trouble came because its shallow roots couldn’t support the plants. This can happen in our lives, too. If we are spiritually immature, we may hear and understand the gospel, but our shallow faith and lack of obedience make it difficult for life change to occur. Immature, shallow faith may have sparks of enthusiasm, but it often fades when faced with adversity.

Have you ever experienced a time of great passion and enthusiasm for God’s word, only to see it fade with time? Give an example. How can we prevent the spiritual rollercoaster and become more persistent Christians?

3. Distracted

In Matthew 13:22, Jesus explains that the seed on the third type of soil sprouted, but was quickly choked out by the weeds of worry and wealth. The same can be true for us. We fail to produce spiritual fruit when we are distracted by worrying about life or chasing after wealth. When our priorities get out of whack, it’s easy to spend our time, energy, and resources on things that produce temporary comfort and happiness. We can become distracted from our primary purpose: producing spiritual fruit that lasts for eternity.

What things tend to distract you from producing spiritual fruit?

WE CAN BE FRUITFUL WHEN WE ARE:

1. ROOTED IN THE WORD

In Mathew 13:23, Jesus explains that the good soil that received the seed and produced a large crop represents the man with a good heart and an understanding of the gospel. In Luke 8:15, another account of this parable says this soil “stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, *retain it*, and by persevering produce a crop.” To apply this to our lives, we must realize that we’ll only be fruitful when our hearts are righteous and our

lives are God-honoring. Also, like the soil, we must receive the word, let it permeate our very being, and change our lives. Then we must endure the circumstances and hardships that may come our way, knowing that sometimes fruit can take a while to grow.

READ John 15:7-8

In this Scripture, Jesus explains that the key to bearing fruit is remaining in an intimate love relationship with Him and cherishing His word in our hearts. Remaining in the word and allowing His word to remain in us is essential for bearing fruit.

What are some practical ways that you can receive God's word, grasp it, and allow it to change you?

CONCLUSION: To produce spiritual fruit useful for God's kingdom, Christians must remain rooted in God's word.

APPLY

This week, read John 15:1-8. Let God remind you that, apart from Him, you can accomplish nothing of significance. Ask God to reveal ways that you can "remain in Him" and bear fruit this week.

STUDY NOTES:

(These are for your personal study. This is NOT the lesson.)

Study Guide by David Guzik, 2001. Available online: www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david

HEBREWS 6:7-8

For the earth which drinks in the rain ... and bears herbs useful ... receives blessing from God: When the earth receives rain, and then bears useful plants, it then fulfills its purpose and justifies the blessing of rain sent upon it. The writer to the Hebrews applies the point: "You've been blessed. But where's the fruit?" God is looking for what grows in us after He blesses us, especially what grows in terms of maturity.

But if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected: If ground that is blessed by rain refuses to bear fruit, then who can blame the farmer for burning it?

The picture presented reminds us that growth and bearing fruit is important to keep from falling away. When we really bear fruit, we abide in Jesus (John 15:5) and in no danger of falling away.

MATTHEW 13:18-23

This is he who received seed by the wayside: As the birds devoured the seed on the wayside (Matthew 13:4), so some receive the word with hardened hearts and **the wicked one** quickly **snatches away** the sown word. The word has no effect because it never penetrates and is quickly taken away.

The **wayside** soil represents those who never really hear the word with understanding. The word of God must be understood before it can truly bear fruit. One of Satan's chief works is to keep men in darkness regarding their understanding of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

On stony places: As seed falling on the thin soil on top of the stony places quickly springs up and then quickly withers and dies (Matthew 13:5-6), so some respond to the word with immediate enthusiasm yet soon wither away. This soil represents those who receive the word enthusiastically, but their life is short-lived, because they are not willing to endure **tribulation or persecution ... because of the word.**

Spurgeon made a good point: "I want you clearly to understand that the fault did not lie in the suddenness of their supposed conversion. Many sudden conversions have been among the best that have ever happened." The problem was not their sudden growth, but their lack of depth.

"Tribulation is a general term for suffering which comes from outside; *persecution* is deliberately inflicted, and usually implies a religious motive. *Falls away* is literally 'is tripped up'; it is not a gradual loss of interest, but a collapse under pressure." (France)

Among the thorns: As seed falling among thorns would grow the stalks of grain among the thorns yet soon be choked out

(Matthew 13:7), so some respond to the word and grow for a while, but are choked and stopped in their spiritual growth by competition from unspiritual things. This soil represents fertile ground for the word; but their soil is *too* fertile, because it also grows all sorts of other things that choke out the word of God. Namely, it is **the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches** that **choke the word**.

Good ground: As seed falling on good ground brings a good crop of grain (Matthew 13:8), so some respond rightly to the word and bear much fruit. This soil represents those who receive the word, and it bears fruit in their soil - in differing proportions (**some hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty**), though each has a generous harvest.

Therefore, hear the parable of the sower: We benefit from seeing bits of ourselves in all four soils.

- Like the **wayside**, sometimes we allow the word no room at all in our lives.
- Like the **stony places**, we sometimes have flashes of enthusiasm in receiving the word that quickly burn out.
- Like the soil **among thorns**, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches are constantly threatening to choke out God's word and our fruitfulness.
- Like the **good ground**, the word bears fruit in our lives.

We notice that the difference in each category was with the soil itself. The same seed was cast by the same sower. You could not blame the differences in results on the sower or on the seed, but only on the soil.

The parable was also an encouragement to the disciples. Even though it might seem that few respond, God is in control and the harvest will certainly come. This was especially meaningful in light of the rising opposition to Jesus. "Not all will respond, but there will be some who do, and the harvest will be rich." (France) Even more than describing the mixed progress of the gospel message, the parable of the sower compels the listener to ask, "What kind of soil am I?"