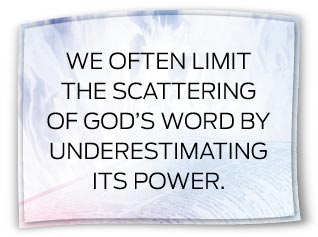


**Bonita Joyner Shields**

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esus’ parable of the sower in Luke 8:4-15 speaks to the condition of our hearts. God seeks to plant the seed of His Word into our hearts; but its ability to bear fruit depends on the condition of our hearts.

What does a heart open to God’s voice look like? How can we nurture it so that the seed of God’s Word will grow and take root? How can God’s Word produce a spiritual revival in our lives?  
  
**The Sower, the Seed, and the Soil**  
The parable of the sower is found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:1-9, 13-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15). All versions contain three main elements: the sower, the seed, and the soil.  
  
**The Sower.** To sow means to scatter seed over the ground. In biblical times farmers carried seed in baskets or pouches attached to their waists. Taking a handful of seed, they threw or scattered it with a sweeping motion of the hand and arm.1  
  
When a sower *scatters* seed, he/she doesn’t merely take one seed, place it gingerly onto the ground, and go on! While sowers designate an area of ground onto which they will sow, they throw as many seeds as possible because they know that not all of the seeds will grow to maturity.  
  
Scripture recognizes God as the sower (see Matt. 13:37). Ellen White wrote, “Like a sower in the field, [Christ] came to scatter the heavenly grain of truth.”2  
  
**The Seed.** Scripture identifies the seed as the Word of God (see Luke 8:11). Just as the seed contains the life of a plant, God’s Word is life to those who receive it. Just as a farmer scatters seed with a sweeping motion, it seems as if God *throws* His Word in some of the most unlikely places!  
  
Many years ago, in a Moscow theater, matinee idol Alexander Rostovzev was converted while playing the role of Jesus in a sacrilegious play entitled *Christ in a Tuxedo*. He was supposed to read two verses from the Sermon on the Mount, remove his gown, and cry out, “Give me my tuxedo and top hat!”  
  
But as he read the words, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matt. 5:3, 4), he began to tremble. Instead of keeping to the script, he kept on reading from Matthew 5, ignoring the coughs, calls, and foot-stomping of the other actors. Finally, recalling a verse he had learned in his childhood in a Russian Orthodox church, he cried, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42). Before the curtain could be lowered, Rostovzev had trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.3  
  
God *throws* His Word in the most unlikely places in order to try to save as many of His wayward children as He can. We often limit the scattering of God’s Word by underestimating its power.  
  
While Christ came to scatter seeds of truth to human hearts, He also calls us to sow seeds of truth in human hearts. Sowing seeds of truth is not always easy, as Christ’s life revealed to us. Ellen White wrote, “He left His home of security and peace, left the glory that He had with the Father before the world was, left His position upon the throne of the universe. He went forth a suffering, tempted man; went forth in solitude, to sow in tears, to water with His blood, the seed of life for a world lost.”4  
  
We may also be called to suffering, solitude, tears, and sometimes death, as we sow the seeds of God’s truth. But we will not sow in vain. Who can forget our forerunners in the Christian faith: the Waldenses, John Wycliffe, John Huss? They, and others, gave their lives for the sake of Christ and His Word. Ellen White wrote of them, “They were hunted to death; yet their blood watered the seed sown, and it failed not of yielding fruit.”5  
  
**The Soil**. Four elements are necessary for healthy soil: nitrogen, lime, phosphoric acid, and potash. When one is out of balance, it affects the life of the plant. When plants are strong and healthy, they have the ability to resist their “enemies”: weeds, bugs, drought, etc.  
  
The condition of the human heart—our soul—is of utmost importance to the life of the Spirit. Just as strong, healthy plants are more capable of resisting their enemies, when our souls are strong and healthy we also have the ability to resist the enemy.  
  
In this parable the work of the enemy is obvious. In the hard surface of the path, where the seed of God’s Word is trampled and undervalued, Satan steals the Word out of hearers’ hearts. When the rocky soil produces plants that have no root/depth, Satan removes the Word from the heart. When the thorns of care, worry, and riches/pleasure are allowed to crowd out the plants, Satan chokes the Word from the heart.  
  
But notice the plants in the good, healthy soil. *In this soil Satan couldn’t take the seeds of God’s Word from the heart!* The enemy became powerless! The seeds grew and “yielded a crop a hundredfold” (Luke 8:8, NKJV).6

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| |  | | --- | | **Questions for Reflection and Sharing**    **1**. Think about your present situation. Is the soil of your soul good, hard-packed, rocky, or weed-infested? Why?  **2.** What one thing would you do to improve the soil of your soul so that God's Word can find it easier to grow?  **3.** In the context of this parable, what does it mean for you to grow into maturity? | | http://www.adventistreview.org/site/1/template/clear.gif |

**Feeding the Soul**  
If you’re like me, you find yourself described in more than one of the soils above! What can we do to keep the condition of our souls strong and healthy so we can bear fruit? I suggest three things:  
  
1. The first description of the good soil in Luke 8:15 mentions that the people heard the Word “with a noble and good heart.” Pray for a clean heart and a right spirit. Read Psalm 51:10-12. Sing it. Pray it. We have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (see Rom. 3:23; 7:14). And because of sin, even our good works are tainted with impure motives.  
  
2. The second description of the good soil said that the people *kept* the Word. In order to keep Satan from stealing, removing, or choking the Word out of our lives, we must *keep* it. In order to keep it, four things must take place: We must *hear* God’s Word. Spending time with the Lord in His Word, listening to the preaching of His Word, and studying God’s Word with fellow believers are all excellent ways to hear God speaking to us.  
  
We must *understand* God’s Word. Do we take the time to wrestle with it? Study it? Ask others for guidance regarding it? God’s Word isn’t always easy to understand, but He promises that His Spirit will help us (see 1 Cor. 2:10-12).  
  
We must *accept* God’s Word. Acceptance involves a willingness to receive, to possess. Once we understand what God is saying to us, sometimes (quite honestly), we just don’t want to receive it! But for me, in those times I finally accepted His Word for my life, the peace that passes understanding filled my soul (see Phil. 4:7).  
  
We must *obey* God’s Word. Accepting is one thing; taking the action to obey is another. Whether it’s overtly committing to follow the Lord in truths such as Sabbathkeeping or giving up harmful actions to oneself and/or to others, or whether it’s more private surrender, obedience calls for action.  
  
3. The third description of the good soil said that the people will “bear fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15, NKJV). How often have you  prayed, “Lord, how long will it take for me to become *perfect*? How long will it take for John to make a decision for Christ?” We want our souls—and the souls of others—to spring up quickly.  
  
**Good Soil, Good Harvest**  
What is your heart made of? Do you value God’s Word? Are you rooted in His Word so that you can withstand the temptations of the enemy? Do you want Him to calm your anxious heart? Whatever the condition of your heart, God is willing and able to plant His seeds of life within it.  
  
Pray for a pure heart. Hear, understand, accept, and obey His Word. Abide in Him, looking to Him for growth. He will accomplish it—even in the most unlikely places.   
  
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1 Taken from [**www.middletownbiblechurch.org/biblecus/biblec6.htm**](http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/biblecus/biblec6.htm).  
2 Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900), p. 33.  
3 Taken from [**http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/b/bible\_power\_of.htm**](http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/b/bible_power_of.htm). Quoted from J. K. Johnston, Why Christians Sin (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1992), p. 121.  
4 E. G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 36.  
5 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 78.  
6 Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.  
  
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*Bonita Joyner Shields is an editor and assistant director for discipleship in the General Conference Sabbath School  
and Personal Ministries Department. This article was published September 27, 2012.*