**"SHE WHO HAS EARS, LET HER HEAR!"**

***Matthew 13:18 (NASB)***

***Hear then the parable of the sower.***

* **Lesson:** The reception of the Word of God is determined by the condition of the heart.
* **Main Point**: If you *truly hear God’s Word*, you will become a sower of the Eternal Seed, and multitudes of people will hear the Truth you have heard.
* **Key Verses**: Matthew 12:46-50, 13:1-43; Luke 8:1-21; Mark 4:1-34; Romans 10:13-18
* **Writer**: Ginny Porter \*from notes taken from Herb Hodges message, “At What Level Do You Listen?”
* **Hear the Word**: This lesson is available on audio.

**Introduction**

***Luke 8:18, 21, (HCSB)***

***18 Therefore, take care how you listen. For whoever has, more will be given to him; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken away from him.***

***21 But He replied to them, “My mother and My brothers are those who hear and do the word.***

Throughout the Bible, there is a great emphasis placed on the necessity of hearing what God says. In Hebrew the word is S*hama,* and it has special significance to the Jewish people. A prayer known as *Shama Israel* begins with these words, “***Hear, O Israel***” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41). The word Shama means to ***listen or to hear obediently,*** and it’s also translated as obey. But the most important aspect of the word was this: they were to listen carefully and transfer exactly what they heard to the next generation (Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalms 78:1-8, 145:4-13).

When the prophet Isaiah received his commission, he *heard* the voice of the Lord saying: “Who shall I send; who will go for Us?” Isaiah replied, “Here I am. Send me.” The message he was told to preach would fall on deaf ears (Isaiah 6:8-10). The people refused to hear the message God sent through His prophet, and so approximately seven hundred and fifty years later, God spoke through His one and only Son the same message (Hebrew 1:1-10; John 1:1-14). Jesus cited Isaiah as He described the people who had ears and eyes, but they remained deaf and blind because of the hardness of their hearts. They failed repeatedly to listen or obey God’s Word. Reading the full message in context will clarify exactly who had ears to hear the Word of God and who didn’t (Matthew 12:46-50, Luke 8:1-21). When Jesus spoke in parables, He was not merely saying words. He was depositing His truth into the fertile soil of the hearts of His disciples. Now, if you have ears… then hear the parable of the sower.

***Matthew 13:1-16 (NIV)***

***That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.” The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and they will have abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. This is why I speak to them in parables: “Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “  ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them. But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.’***

**The Soil, The Seed and The Sower**

In this parable, ***the soil*** represents the human heart, ***the Seed*** is the Word of God and ***the Sower*** is the Lord Jesus. In his message, “At What Level Do You Listen,” Herb Hodges said there were four types of people who followed Jesus around. The first three categories of listeners he named the curious crowds, the casual listeners and the convinced listeners. This group represents about ***seventy-five percent*** of people whose hearts are exposed to God's Word. Those who fall into this category hear God’s Word, but do not act upon them. Although they may call *Jesus Lord*, they don’t do what He says. The Macarthur’s Study Bible is more specific in the assessment of those who fit this description. The commentary on Luke 6:46-47 says, “*It is not sufficient to give lip service to Christ’s Lordship. Genuine faith produces obedience. A tree is known by its fruits.*” (Matthew 7:21-23)

***Luke 11:28 (NASB)***

***But He said, “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and observe it.***

* **Soil #1** (**Matthew 13:1-4)**  **The Crowd:** The ones along the roadside were curious listeners. The seed lay on top of the soil, but it had no reception into their hearts (Matthew 7:18-27). Crowds are often fickle, and they will only follow the leader as long as it benefits them.
* **Soil #2 (Matthew 13:5-6)**  **The Casual Listener:** These were the ones whose hearts wererocky. The seed fell on the soil, and got down in it. But there was no root because they were confused in their loyalty. They were shallow listeners, and they soon fell away.
* **Soil #3 (Matthew 13:7, 13-15) The Convinced Listener:** This type of soil represents those whose hearts are full of thorns. The seed fell on the soil and penetrated it. Yet, the thorns kept that seed from sprouting upwards, and therefore it produced no crop. There was too much competing for their attention**.**

Just because we are exposed to God’s Word, does not mean that we receive it. When the Jesus sows His Eternal Seed (the Word), He expects to receive a harvest. For all His labor only about twenty-five percent of the soil will produce a crop. Jesus “weeded” out the uncommitted majority by telling them some hard truths about the cost of being His disciples (Luke 9:18-27, 14:25-34).

***John 6:60, 66-68 (NIV)***

***60 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”***

***66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.***

***John 8:43, 47***

***"Why don’t you understand what I say? Because you cannot listen to MY Word. The one who is from God listens to God’s words. This is why you don’t listen, because you are not from God."***

**Digging Deeper:** James 1:21-25; Luke 6:46; John 5:24-47, 6:32-69; Matthew 13:37-42; Revelation 3:14-20

**A Receptive Heart is a Good Heart**

***Luke 8:15 (HCSB)***

***But the seed in the good ground - these are the ones who, having heard the word with an honest and good heart, hold on to it and by enduring, bear fruit.***

* **Soil #4 (Matthew 13:8-12, 16, 23-24, 30-43) The** **Committed Listener:** This last group represents only ***twenty–five percent*** of Jesus’ followers; they are the ***spiritually reproductive listeners.*** The Good Seed fell upon the good soil of their hearts. These are careful listeners, true Christians and Disciples of Christ. Although they are*few in number, they’re faithful* *and fruitful investments for the Sower*. Jesus calls them Sons and Daughters of the Kingdom. And He further identified them as ***Good Seeds, and sowers of His Word.***

The following are notes from the Macarthur Study Bible on Luke 8:15, specifically the words…heard, hold and bear fruit. “*This constitutes evidence of true salvation. ‘Heard’ is a reference to understanding and believing (John 8:31, 47). ‘Hold’ refers to ongoing obedience (Luke 11:28, John 14:21-24). ‘Fruit’ is good works” (Matthew 7:16-20 and James 2:14-26).*

**WORD SEARCH:**

* **Follow** in Greek Strong’s #190 *akoloutheo: as union; to be in the same way with, accompany,* ***specifically as a disciple;*** *- to follow, reach.* (Luke 6:40 and John 12:26)
* **Hear/listen** in GreekStrong’s #191 *akouo: to hear-give in the audience of, come into the ears, hear or harken-****understand****.*
* **Told/put forth/ or presented** in GreekStrong’s #3098 and #*5087 paratithemi: to place alongside, present, to deposit-as a trust for protection, commit to the keeping of.* (Matthew 13:24,31)

**Passages for Comparison**

(John 6:45) "*It is written in the Prophets: They will all be taught by God." (Isaiah 54:13) "Everyone who* ***listens*** *to the Father and learns from Him comes to Me." (Luke 9:35) "This is My SON, My chosen ONE;* ***listen*** *to Him!" (John 10:27) "My sheep* ***hear*** *My voice and follow Me."*

***Psalms 78:1 (NASB)***

***"LISTEN, O MY people, to My instruction; incline your ears to the words of My mouth."***

**Digging Deeper:** Matthew 13:36-43; Psalm 78:1-8; 1 Peter 1:22-25; Isaiah 6:8-10

Those without spiritual ears will not hear Jesus. Consequently, they cannot understand what He says, and they certainly don’t follow Him. Those who don’t follow Jesus, do not fish for men and women, and there is no return on the Word that was planted within them. They are not “Good seeds,” and they don’t become sowers of the Eternal Word. As a result, they don’t plant, and there is no harvest. The Sower -- the Lord Jesus -- receives no return on His investment in them. In the end they will receive no reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

But, on the other hand, when anyone has ears to hear the Word of God, they understand what Jesus says and acts on what he has heard; these are true disciples of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

If you have ears to hear, you will understand the will of your Father in heaven. You will obey what He says because He is *your Lord!* As you go through your life, you will sow the Word of God and obey His last command by making disciples. Through investing His Word into the fertile soil of the hearts of His sons and daughters, He will receive a bountiful harvest. The plan has not changed. If you are truly a daughter of the King, then through you He will reap a large harvest, and one day you will hear these words: “Well done my good and faithful servant, you were faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master's joy" (Matthew 25:22).

**Digging Deeper:** John 14:23-24, 15:14-16, 16:1-16; Matthew 4:9, 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 2:6-15, 5:11-20; Isaiah 60:1-5

**Think On These Things**

1. Do you really know God, and do you hear His Word? ***Have you been born again***? (1 Peter 1:23-2; John 3: 1-16)
2. Read Matthew 13:37-42 and answer the following question: What will ultimately happen to the weeds?
3. When you hear the Word of God, is it an investment or is it expenditure? (Matthew 13:23-24; John 15:16) Are you a seed or a weed? (Matthew 13:36-37)
4. What do you think Jesus meant when He said that the secrets of the kingdom of Heaven would be given to His disciples and not to the others?
5. Read the context of Matthew 12:46-50 and Luke 8:1-21. Who was Jesus pointing to when He said, “Here are my mother, sisters and brothers”?
6. In light of the fact that the writer of the book of James was Jesus’ half-brother, what is the significance of his words in James 1:21-25? (Clue is found in Matthew 12:46-50; Luke 8:1-21)
7. Estimate the amount of time you have spent in church “hearing” the Bible taught. How much of the Word of God have you been ***entrusted*** with? (Matthew 13:8-12)
8. What are you doing with all the Truth you have been given? (Luke 12:48)
9. In Matthew 13:34-36, Jesus referenced Psalms 78:1-8. What are the first words of the Psalm? What are God’s people supposed to do with what they have *heard*?
10. Do you think you have the same responsibility?
11. Jesus ended the parable of the Sower with these words: “The righteous will shine like the sun….” Read Matthew 13:43 and compare to Daniel 12:3. Who are the “shiny ones” in the Kingdom?
12. Do you ***hear Jesus***? Will you ***follow*** His strategy and obey His command to ***make disciples***?

**Pearls of Wisdom**

***Matthew 13:43 (NASB)***

***Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father’s kingdom. Anyone who has ears should listen!***