



Parable of the Soils

WARM UP: *Regarding house plants, do you; A) talk and sing to them like friends? B) Forget about them until the leaves fall off? C) Just hope no one gives you one?*

When it comes to growing things, you may have a “green thumb” and grow whatever you want or even artificial houseplants tremble when they hear you coming. I am not sure about you, but some people seem to be able to grow anything and everything. They even have an amazing ability to bring seemingly dead plants back to life when anyone else would have just tossed them out. Others seem to kill everything they touch no matter how hard they try. Some don’t even try.

If there is one thing I’ve learned when it comes to growing things, it is this. A successful harvest depends more on the condition of the soil than it does anything else. If the soil isn’t prepared properly for the seed, you are wasting both your time and the seed. It doesn’t stand much of a chance.

The same thing is true when it comes to spiritual matters. When Jesus left the synagogue and began to teach outdoors, he did so for a reason. The spiritual condition of the hearts of those who were opposed to him were a waste of his energy and effort. Now, he would reach out to people whose hearts were more open and responsive.

Background: Jesus had already made unmistakable claims about his true identity, and there was increasing division between those who accepted and those who rejected. The religious leaders had already decided that Jesus was not the Messiah. Jesus began teaching a series of parables about the Kingdom of Heaven. These “parables” hid the truth from those who had their minds made up, having already chosen to reject Jesus. Those who truly wanted to know Jesus and listened carefully would understand his words.

READ ABOUT IT: Matt. 13:1-17

1. *What is a parable and why did Jesus use them?*
2. *What type of soils does Jesus mention? What characterizes each?*
3. *How would you describe the farmers method of planting?*
4. *What happens to the seed in each type of soil? What was the major difference in the results?*
5. *What do parables accomplish that simple and direct speech lack?*
6. *How does Isaiah’s quote explain the difficulty in understanding parables correctly?*
7. *How would you explain this parable to someone who has no knowledge of farming or gardening? What analogy would you use?*
8. *How would you describe the root system in your spiritual life right now?*
9. *What in your life nurtures your spiritual growth? What steps could you take to improve the soil of your spiritual life?*