

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will do Bible study together about one important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We will use a very easy Bible study method called the five steps method. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. The first series of 6 Bible studies is about 6 fundamental questions in life: "How do I respond to God's Word?" "Where do I come from?" "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" "Where am I going?" And "How do I bear fruit?" Today's Bible study is: A DISCIPLE MAKES THE RIGHT RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read Luke 8:4-15. Let us take turns to read one verse each.

(T) Luke 8:4-15. "While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told them this parable: (S) "A farmer went out to sow his seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. (T) Some fell on the rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. (S) Other seed fell among the thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. (T) Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown. When he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (S) His disciples asked him what this parable meant. (T) He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, "though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand." (S) "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. (T) Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. (S) Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. (T) The seed that fell among the thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. (S) But the seed on the good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in this Bible passage. "Which truth in this passage is important for you?" or "Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?" Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) I discovered that there are three persons who want to do something with the word of God that is sown into my heart. Christ sows his word into my heart and wants his word to bear fruit in my life. The devil tries to take God's word away from my heart so that God's word will have no influence in my life. I have the responsibility to do something with Christ's word. If I hear it and retain it in a good and noble heart, then by persevering I can produce a crop. But if I don't do anything with Christ's word, then I will lose it completely. A very important truth for me in this Bible passage is that every time I hear the words of the Bible, it is *my responsibility* to put them into practise.

(T) I discovered that verse 14 describes all the other enemies of God's word. It says that God's word gets choked to death by the worries of life, by the desire to get rich and by living a life of pleasure. The other big enemy of Christ is the sinful world outside me or the sinful nature inside me. They don't want the word of Christ to bear fruit in my life. Therefore they choke the word of God to death. A very important truth for me in this Bible passage is that it is *my responsibility* to be watchful and not allow worries, wealth or pleasures to choke the word of God in me to death.

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in this passage and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. What does "the seed" represent?

(T) The seed represents the word of God (Luke 8:11) and especially the message about the kingdom of God (Matthew 13:19), which begins with the gospel (Mark 1:14-15).

2nd Question. What does each of the four different kinds of soil represent?

(S) In the days of Jesus, the farmers did not have machinery to sow their seed. They used their hands to scatter the seed to the left and to the right as they walked. So some of the seeds would fall on the path on which the sower was walking. And some seeds would fall on bad patches of soil where there was rock under a shallow layer of soil. Some of the seeds would fall on patches where thorns were growing. And some of the seeds would

fall on good and clean soil. The four kinds of soil represent four different kinds of hearts (Luke 8:12). But the meaning of these four different kinds of soil is very important.

3rd Question. What does the soil as hard as the path represent?

(T) The path is a picture of a *hardened, insensible and unresponsive heart*. Whenever my heart has this attitude or condition, I DO NOT RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD AT ALL. I constantly think that God's Word contains nothing of importance for me. I make no effort to understand the message of the Bible (Matthew 13:19) or I put off my response to God's Word. Consequently, my heart grows indifferent and becomes hardened. Satan knows the potential power of God's Word and is ever ready to snatch away what is left unaccepted!

The main lesson is to make every effort to *understand* God's Word (Matthew 13:23c) and then to *accept* it (Mark 4:20b) whenever I hear, read or study it! I must deal with my attitudes of indifference, procrastination or hostility!

4th Question. What does the rocky soil represent?

(S) The rocky soil is a picture of a shallow, rootless and impulsive heart. Whenever my heart has this attitude or condition, I RESPOND TOO RASHLY TO GOD'S WORD. During meetings, I get excited and emotionally affected by the message and the personal appeal of the speaker. Impulsively I jump up to accept the message or to make some decision. But I do not think about the meaning of the words and I do not consider the consequences of God's Word. When the people of the world begin to threaten me or persecute me because of this message in the Bible, I lose interest in God's Word, stop to follow Jesus and fall away. This means that I have "no roots". I accept the message, but without conviction. That is why I do not persevere. That is why I do not retain God's Word. I fail to consider that true discipleship implies self-surrender, self-denial, sacrifice, service and suffering. I do not count the cost of becoming a disciple of Jesus. That is why I only last for a while.

The main lesson is to *retain* God's Word (Luke 8:15c) and to *persevere* to believe and to obey it under all circumstances. I must immediately deal with my tendency only to be emotionally touched when I hear God's Word!

5th Question. What does the soil with thorns represent?

(T) The soil with the thorns is a picture of a *divided and pre-occupied heart*. Whenever my heart has this attitude or condition, I RESPOND TO OTHER THINGS BESIDES GOD'S WORD. My heart is divided between the things of this world and the things of God. I give so much place in my heart to worry about my daily work and life, or to dream and plan about how to make more money, or to enjoy all the pleasures of life, that my heart does not really have room for God's Word. Then I am continuously distracted by the things of the world and have the wrong priorities. Then I am so pre-occupied with the things of the world, that I give no time to meditate on God's Word or practise God's Word. The result is that God's Word in my heart is choked. Consequently, I cannot grow to maturity and I can also not bear any fruit for God.

The main lesson is to *keep my heart clean, honest and good* (Luke 8:15a). I must keep it free from the worries of life, the deceitfulness of wealth, the pleasures of the world and the wrong desires. I must immediately deal with my worries, my tendency to be materialistic and with my wrong desires and wrong priorities.

6th Question. What does the noble and good soil represent?

(S) The noble and good soil is a picture of the *responsive heart, the retaining heart, the well-prepared heart and the fruitful heart*. Whenever my heart has this attitude or condition, I RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD IN THE WAY THAT JESUS CHRIST WOULD LIKE ME TO RESPOND. With this attitude or condition, my heart is the opposite of the attitudes and conditions of the first three hearts. In contrast to the first soil, whenever I hear, read or study God's Word, I *listen* carefully to it, *understand* it (Matthew 13:23) and *accept* it (Mark 4:20b). I do this so that God's Word may save me and change me (Luke 8:12). In contrast to the second soil, whenever I hear God's Word, I first consider the cost of believing and obeying these words. I count the cost, because I want to persevere being a disciple, even when I face difficulties or persecution. I *retain* God's Word deep in my heart and *cling to it under all difficult circumstances* (Luke 8:15). In contrast to the third soil, I keep my heart *clean and free* from whatever can choke God's Word (Luke 8:15). For example, I keep it clean from worries, money and worldly pleasures. God's Word can only work in my heart when I respond to God's Word, when I retain God's Word with conviction and when I keep my heart clean! Thus, I *bear fruit for God with effort and perseverance* (Luke 8:15). Sometimes I will bear thirty times more fruit and sometimes a hundred times more fruit (Matthew 13:23; Mark 4:20)!

7th Question. Is this parable a message for the preachers of God's Word or a message for the receivers of God's Word?

(T) This parable is in the first place not a message for the *preachers* of God's Word, but a message for the *receivers* of God's Word. The parable does not simply tell us that the preacher must expect four different kinds of people in this world with four different kinds of responses to the gospel message. This parable tells us much more! The parable teaches us that all people in the world, including preachers, *can have all four kinds of attitudes towards God's Word at different times in their lives!* The attitude of the hearer and the condition of his heart at any given time determine the effect that God's Word will have on his life! His attitude and the condition of his heart will determine whether he will grow, change and bear fruit or not.

8th Question. What is the summary message of this parable?

(S) The message of this parable is that *the condition or attitude of your heart determines the response you give to God's Word. And the response you give to God's Word determines how much fruit you will bear for God and how much influence you will have on people.* This is a warning for people who do not respond to God's Word. But this is a great encouragement for people who change the attitude of their heart. Every time you hear, read or study the Bible, you can immediately change your attitude. Then you will hear, understand and accept God's word. Then you will retain it in a clean heart and bear fruit with perseverance!

9th Question. Why is the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom only given to the disciples?

(T) The message of the whole New Testament contains the secrets of the kingdom of God. After Christ came, it is no more an unknown secret, but a revealed truth. However, Christ does not reveal this message to everybody, but only to people with the right attitude and condition of heart. Although many hear the gospel and New Testament teachings, they do not really hear and turn to God, because they have hardened their hearts. Isaiah 6:9-10 says that the Israelites hardened their hearts when God spoke his words to them. And Matthew 12 says that the Pharisees hardened their hearts when Jesus spoke his words to them. That is why God finally allowed them to become what they wanted to be. However, every person who sincerely responds to God's word need not have any fear. Every good and clean heart will respond to God's word, will grow and will bear fruit!

10th Question. Why does the devil want take away God's Word from our hearts? (Luke 8:12)

(S) The devil wants to take away God's Word from our hearts, because God's Word is a powerful means to save us and change us! Because the Bible is God's means to save and change people, the devil will try every trick in the world to take God's Word away from the hearts of people! Beware! Jesus has warned us!

11th Question. How can I persevere to produce a crop?

(T) The devil is *around* us, the materialistic world is *outside* us and the sinful nature is *inside* us. They continually fight against us and we must fight back. How do we persevere? We persevere by hearing, reading, studying, memorising, meditating and applying God's Words in the Bible to our own lives and by passing them on to other people. We persevere by continuing in these disciplines even when we face difficulties and persecution. We must decide not to give up. We must persevere. We can persevere, because God promised to be with us.

(S) **STEP 4. APPLY**

Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of **possible applications** from Luke 8:4-15.

(T) Listen very well to the preaching of the Bible and try and understand the messages of the Bible.

(S) Believe the messages of the Bible in order to be saved

(T) Develop personal convictions from the Bible. Do not simply have knowledge of the Bible.

(S) Meditate on and memorise some Bible verses in order to retain them in my life

(T) Make sure that my heart is clean every time I read or study the Bible

(S) Bear fruit by regularly applying the messages of the Bible

(T) Afterwards consider which possible application does God want you to turn into a **personal application**.

(S) My personal application is the following. God wants me to understand the Bible every time I hear it, so that the devil cannot take it away from my heart. Therefore I want to do one Bible Study every week. Doing Bible Study every week will help me to understand God's word much better.

(T) My personal application is the following. God wants me to grow and to bear fruit. Therefore, every time I read and study the Bible, I will ask myself, "How can this word change me or influence others?" And then I will try to put it into practise.

(S) **STEP 5. PRAY**

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in Luke 8:4-15.

Dear Father in heaven, help me to understand what you say in the Bible. Teach me to do Bible Study every week. Help me to be watchful so that the devil cannot take your word away from my heart.

(T) Dear Father in heaven, I face problems and persecution. Give me your grace to persevere to hold on to your word. Let your words continue to change me. Give me the courage to use the Bible to influence other people. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen!

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Answer the following question: "Whenever Jesus sows the words of the Bible on your heart, what kind of a heart do you have?"

Second. Prepare next week's Bible study from Genesis 1:1 – 2:4. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".