

MESSAGE 4:

THE CULTIVATION OF THE SEED

SUGGESTED PASSAGE: Luke 8:8, 15 (NASB)

⁸ Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." ¹⁵ "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance."

MESSAGE GOAL: The goal of this message on *The Cultivation of the Seed* is to identify the good soil in our lives and develop ways in which we can nurture, nourish, and encourage the gospel seed in that soil to take root and grow to its full potential—free from distractions, disturbances, and impediments.

INTRODUCTION: We have explained that everybody's soul is distorted. We were born with distorted souls because we were all born in sin. That distortion became even more magnified through our experiences, through the sins we have committed, through our circumstances, and through our environment. All of these things have worked together to add to the distortion of our souls.

But when the seed of God's Word grows in the right soil, it changes the distortion. In Luke 8, verses 8 and 15, Jesus introduces us to the seed's work in good soil. We learn that the seed becomes fruitful only when the soil, the soul, is ripe to receive and cultivate it. So how do we receive the implanted Word "in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance?"

James 1:19-22 gives us solid answers to this question. We are told in this passage that God wants us to be "quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger..." Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls."

James says to Christians, "I want you to be quick to hear God's point of view on any matter," which means listening to God's Word rather than being quick to say, "Well, I've always believed...." or "My momma told me...." In other words, the first place you go is to God's Word to get His point of view, not

the last place you go after you've tried everything else. Often God's point of view is our last resort when every other point of view has not worked.

The thing that keeps the soul's soil from receiving the Word so the seed can grow is our point of view, which too often we are quick to speak about rather than being quick to hear what God has to say. This is a problem because, as we know, man's point of view almost always interferes with God's point of view. That's why James tells us to be "slow to speak." When you speak, you have to make sure that what you're saying is what God is saying.

James also tells us to be "slow to anger." He says that because when what God says contradicts what we say, we can get angry. We can throw a spiritual temper tantrum. What God wants from us is described in James 1:22: "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." The main reason you want to address sin in your life is to remove any interference with the signal from God's Word reaching your soil to nourish and grow the seed.

SERMON POINTS:

1. THE GOAL IS NOT TO FIX THE DISTORTION, BUT TO GROW THE SEED IN OUR SOULS

As believers we already possess the seed of God's Word

- "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- We need to grow because the new life we have received is in seed form

We are born as spiritual babies, not fully-grown adult Christians

- We need to be reminded that there is nothing wrong with the seed in us
- The problem is that our soil may not be a good environment for the seed's growth

our society's problem
is not solely our *government's* problem.
it is **the church's** problem.
it is *our* problem.



2. THE SOUL MIGHT REBEL AGAINST THE GROWTH PROCESS

Even as believers, we can resist and reject the Word of God when we don't like what it says

- Rebellion can occur when the soul receives the Word but doesn't like the Word
- But once the Word gets into our souls, the seed is going to open up and life is going to flourish

The cure for rebellion is to receive the Word in godly humility

- We must embrace the Word, which means hold it tightly to us
- Once the Word gets into our souls, the seed is going to open up and life is going to flourish

3. WE WILL BEAR FRUIT WHEN OUR SOIL IS GOOD AND CONDUCTIVE TO GROWTH

There are three characteristics of the spiritual fruit we are to produce as Christians

- Characteristic #1: Fruit is always visible
- Characteristic #2: Fruit does not consume itself unless it is rotten
- Characteristic #3: Fruit is always for the benefit of others

Words have great power that can be used for good or evil

- Some people have used words to the harm of others
- How much more should we use the Word of God for good?

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

TRYING TO CLEAN UP THE MESS:

In earlier days, before the development of technology and the more sophisticated ways of determining and measuring a patient's mental health, the staff at mental hospitals used an unusual technique to help judge whether a patient was well enough to be released. They would put a stopper in the sink of a janitor's closet and turn the water on until the sink was overflowing onto the floor. Then they would give a patient a mop and send him or her into the closet with instructions to clean up the mess. They would leave the patient alone for a few minutes and then come back to see how the patient dealt with the problem. If the patient was

simply mopping away at the water that was overflowing from the sink onto the floor without figuring out the root of the problem by turning the water off and pulling the plug, it was determined that this patient was not yet ready to be released.

Far too many of us are like that mental patient, spending an enormous amount of time trying to mop up the messes in our lives without getting to the root of the problem. But no matter how much mopping we do, if the stopper is still in the sink and the water is still running, we haven't changed our situation. Religion is man's attempt to mop up his own mess, to fix the stuff that's overflowing in his life, only to discover that it just keeps coming because we haven't gotten to the root of the problem.

RECEPTION PROBLEMS:

Many people have satellite television, which requires a receiver to pick up the signal from the satellite. That receiver is already set up to receive the signal from way out there in space so the person can watch television. Your new nature as a believer, the seed that has been planted in you, is already tuned to the Word of God. But many times people who have satellite receivers see the message on their screen that says, "Searching for signal." The problem is that something has interfered with the signal coming in. The good soil Jesus spoke about is soil in which the interference has been addressed so that the receiver, the seed, is able to pick up the signal that comes from the Word. This creates the growth of the seed in the life, or soul, of the believer.

GETTING THE RIGHT ANSWER:

Calculators are wonderful instruments that have been programmed to respond to the numbers you put into them. You don't have to make the calculator come up with the right answer; it's already set to do that. If you put one plus one into the calculator, it is going to come up with two. You just have to input the right information in order for the calculator to do its good work. When you become a believer, God placed within you that which is already set up to respond to His Word. Our only challenge is to make sure that we have the right soil to receive it. The Spirit of God wants to use the Word of God to make us like the Son of God.

**our mission field is not merely across the sea.
it is across the street.**



SERMON LINES:

This message is designed to encourage believers to do whatever is necessary to ensure that the soil of their lives is conducive to the full growth of the seed that is implanted within them.

This message also presents a strong statement of the requirements for that good soil, and calls believers to become fruitful and productive in their lives.

QUOTES BY DR. TONY EVANS:

"Religion is man's attempt to mop up his own mess."

"When you became a believer in Jesus Christ, God placed within you that which is already set up to respond to His Word. But your soil, your heart, must be conducive to receive that which is already there in seed form."

"Just being in church is not a transforming experience. We've all been in church and not changed. Even hearing the Bible preached is not a transforming experience. It may be an inspirational and informational experience, but in and of itself it is not a transforming one. Why? Because the Word must reach the seed implanted in your heart."

"Everything God wants to do in your life has already been placed in there if you possess the seed!"

