

A. LAST WORD

- It is the absolute truth to say that God's Word has the Last Word in all things. For believers seeking to make that their lifestyle it will be the pursuit of a lifetime. (Heb 1:1-3)
- Jesus declared God's Word to be our spiritual food. (Mt 4:4) He also taught that Scripture serves as the foundation that makes us strong to endure all circumstances. (Mt 7:24-27)
- These principles encourage us to pursue and take to heart God's Living and Active Word.
- We see in the Parable of the Soils that the condition of our hearts determines if the Word will be fruitful: Mt 13:1-15 MSG—(Jesus) addressed his congregation, telling stories. "What do you make of this? A farmer planted seed. As he scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road, and birds ate it. Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn't put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled by the weeds. Some fell on good earth, and produced a harvest beyond his wildest dreams. "Are you listening to this? Really listening?" The disciples came up and asked, "Why do you tell stories?" 11-15 He replied, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom. You know how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight; it hasn't been given to them. Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understandings flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That's why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge the people toward receptive insight. In their present state they can stare till doomsday and not see it, listen till they're blue in the face and not get it. I don't want Isaiah's forecast repeated all over again: Your ears are open but you don't hear a thing. Your eyes are awake but you don't see a thing.
- Jesus described four types of responses. Out of the four descriptions given, only one gives God's Word the Last Word and results in spiritual fruitfulness.
- Jesus goes on later in the chapter to interpret this parable. He helps us spot reasons why we may not be receiving the full benefit of our time in God's Word.
- Insights:

B. DEPTH

- Mt 13:19 MSG-- When anyone hears news of the kingdom and doesn't take it in, it just remains on the surface, and so the Evil One comes along and plucks it right out of that person's heart. This is the seed the farmer scatters on the road.
- Jesus says here that at times His Word just lands on the surface and never takes root so it doesn't produce fruit in the life of the hearer. (Example of being too casual or forgetful?)
- If people of Jesus' day needed to hear this, how much more does our world today?
- We're bombarded with a deluge of data from 24/7 news, social media, and bulging inboxes. With this high volume of information it's difficult to take any of it to a deep level.
- To grow spiritually, we need to watch our intake of information, biblical or otherwise.
- Be selective, make knowing Jesus, the Living Word, the primary focus: Phil 3:10 NLT-- I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead.
- Fruit will come when we take Jesus' love and His Word down deep. That takes effort on our part: 2 Tim 2:15: Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

- Diligent = to make prompt, earnest, or energetic effort (Strong's G4704)
- LISTENING EXERCISE:
Is knowing Jesus my top priority? If not, what things are of deeper importance to me?

- Insights:

C. COMMITMENT

- Mt 13:20-21 NLT--The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word.
- In this instance, God's Living and Active Word never develops roots to keep it growing.
- This type of hearing characterizes someone who's not committed to giving God's Word the Final Word in their lives.
- Maybe the reason the Word of God doesn't develop roots and fruit is because our lives are so crowded. It is just added to a long list of things we are pursuing.
- Being committed to a multitude of good things for our families and ourselves is not wrong. But Jesus says that over commitment can prevent the Word from having room to grow.
- We humans are limited by time and space. That means we have to set priorities and make choices even when life is difficult and other people misunderstand.
- Our God-given capacity for choice is a high privilege with far-reaching consequences. We need His wisdom to guide us in those choices: Eph 5:15-17 JBP--Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days. Don't be vague but firmly grasp what you know to be the will of God.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:
Do I have commitments that I either a) can't keep with excellence or b) that are competing with my desire to make God's Word the Final Word in my life? Name them here:

Would you be willing to bring your commitments before the Lord and let Him have the Final Word on them?

- Jesus was clear about desiring deep-rooted commitment from us: Mt 16:24 NLT-- Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.
- Whatever you choose to invest in is the thing that will bear fruit in your life: Gal 6:7 MSG-- Don't be misled: No one makes a fool of God. What a person plants, he will harvest. The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others—ignoring God! — harvests a crop of weeds.

All he'll have to show for his life is weeds! But the one who plants in response to God, letting God's Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life.

- Insights:

D. DISTRACTION

- Mt 13:22 NLT—The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced
- Jesus cites two heart conditions as causes for The Word being choked out: 1) being worried, anxious or over-thinking and 2) setting our hearts on acquiring more things.
- When our attention and energy is diverted by everything going on in our lives, we become anxious and forget the many promises of God's care found in His Living and Active Word:
 - Ps 55:22--Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.
 - Mt 6:27--Can any of you add a single hour to the length of your life by worrying?
 - 1 Peter 5:7 NLT--Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.
- Jesus teaches us that being rich in this world can deceive us into self-reliance and away from relying on God and His Word:
 - Ps 62:10-12 NIV -- Though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them. One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: "Power belongs to you, God, and with you, Lord, is unfailing love"; and, "You reward everyone according to what they have done."
 - Proverbs 11:28 -- He who trusts in his riches will fall, But the righteous will flourish like foliage.
 - 1 Tim 6:17 NLT--Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.
- The distraction of riches and material goods can fill our minds and rob us of the true riches in life. Let's avoid this by letting God's Word have the Last Word in this area.
- Insights:

E. FRUITFUL

- Mt 13:23 NLT--The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"
- When we make room for God's Word in our lives and really listen, the Spirit will help us understand it and make it relevant to whatever we're going through.
- Accepting and acting upon what we hear will grow our trust in the Lord. He is faithful and is always watching over His Word to perform it. (Jeremiah 1:12)
- Seeing The Word work in our hearts and bear fruit in our lives will show us what a great investment it is to make time and space in our lives for the Living and Active Word.
- To enjoy the abundant and fruitful life that Jesus promised, we must give our relationship with Him first place in our hearts and His Word the Final Word in our lives: 1 Chronicles 29:11 AMP--Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and the earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and Yours it is to be exalted as Head over all.
- Insights:

F. PERSONAL APPLICATION

- ONE THING

The One Thing that I'd like to take away from today's class and believe God to accomplish in my life is:

- PONDER THE TRUTH

Which verse or principle stood out to you this week? Write it below taking some time to review it often. Be still in God's presence, alert for new insights. Record them here.

- PROCESSING THE TRUTH

Prayerfully consider the Listening Exercises from this lesson. Ask the Spirit to guide you into a deeper understanding of the truth and to reveal any specific faith steps He his calling you to take. Write down your insights.