



## CHAPTER 4

### How is Your Heart?

#### 4 DIFFERENT SCENARIOS with 4 INEVITABLE OUTCOMES

- A. **PATH:** No SOIL = no GERMINATION.
- B. **ROCKS:** Shallow soil, message is HEARD, WELL-RECEIVED, but sapling quickly WITHERS and DIES because it has no ROOTS.
- C. **THORNS:** Message is heard, seed germinates, but in time it gets CROWDED OUT, STRANGLER, OVERWHELMED by WEEDS & THORNS.
- D. **FERTILE SOIL:** 30, 60, 100 FOLD RETURN.

→ Which of those descriptions best describes your heart? Have you come across people who neatly fit into each category? How do you get a soil / heart to change?

The parable is both a PERSONAL CHALLENGE: How is your HEART?

& ministry EXPLANATION: The CLOSED heart just WON'T GET IT.

SHORT-TERM: This is why many REJECTED Jesus and His teaching.

MEDIUM-TERM: Why when the Disciples shared the Gospel, NOT EVERYONE would receive it.

LONG-TERM: Explains many of our FRUSTRATIONS

- \* This is why much of our outreach work consists of SOIL-PREPARING not SEED-SOWING, let alone HARVEST-REAPING
- \* So, it's FRIENDSHIP-making, TRUST-building, FOUNDATION-laying, PRAYER-undergirding.

→ How does this parable inform our evangelism? How do we go about relating to people in each of the four categories? When is it time to dust off our feet (Mark 6:11)?

THE BIG QUESTION: Is your HEART, in general, a SOIL RIPE & FERTILE for God's Word?

- \* If we believe God's Word contains UNLIMITED POWER, it all comes down to this: Is it going to be able to TAKE ROOT in your HEART?

THE PREMISE: God's Word has unlimited power and potential to ENRICH your LIFE, but it tends to get CROWDED OUT.

- \* What can we do, then, to make sure that our heart is FERTILE, so the seed can EXPLODE INTO LIFE?

#### 1. WHAT ARE THE THORNS IN YOUR SOIL?

Jesus highlighted three ... What are yours?

- i) The WORRIES of this life
  - \* Cold, clammy FEAR which takes over your THOUGHTS.
- ii) The LURE of WEALTH
  - \* Highly SEDUCTIVE; MISSES the POINT.
- iii) DESIRE for other things (Matthew 6:33)

→ Any of these thorns causing you prickly problems? Are they still as culturally relevant today as they were in Jesus' day? What other types of thorns are there?

→ What are your thorns / potential thorns / what comes between you and God / what pulls you away or distracts you from God and His Word?

It's just as important to make your heart INFERTILE to WEEDS as it is to make it FERTILE to SEEDS (Proverbs 4:23). How?

- a) WEEDING: Rip out anything you know to be a WEED.
- b) Lay a WEED NET: What SAFEGUARDS can you put in place? WALK as CLOSE to the LORD as possible.
- c) SOW lots of GOOD SEED: Get INTO the WORD so the WORD can get INTO YOU.
- d) WATCH OVER the seed: Water, fertilise, tend.

→ How might you do each of those? Is there any weeding to be done? How do we do so on an ongoing basis?

→ What about a weed-net: Safeguards, boundaries, precautions to keep the thorns out of your garden? [Read Prov 4:23]

→ How often does seed land in your soil? Do you get into the Word so the Word can get into you? Have you developed good habits around reading the Word? Is the Year of the New Testament helping?

→ How can you tend your own heart? What can you do to watch over the seed?

#### 2. IS YOUR HEART FERTILE FOR THE WORD?

Positive flip is the incredible POTENTIAL of a HEART that is fully HIS.

→ What does it mean to have a heart that is fully His? How would that affect your life? Do you know anyone who gets / got close to 'fully His'?

A considerable part of this is ALLOWING the MASTER FARMER to CULTIVATE your HEART.

- \* Is what's happening around / in / to you PROBLEM, PREDICAMENT, PERIL or is it the FARMER disturbing the SOIL?

→ How does the picture of a Farmer cultivating the soil compare to the reality of the way the Father works on our hearts? How does He do the ploughing and how does it work? Might it explain some of what is happening in and around you right now?

→ Doesn't dry, crusty top need to be broken to get to rich, soft soil below? Discuss!

#### HOW DOES THIS AFFECT US CORPORATELY?

- \* Could we have a church that is RIPE and FERTILE? Where the seed gets planted EASILY and EXPLODES into LIFE every time?
- \* Could we have a WEED-FREE soil? Could we ELIMINATE any THORNS that might potentially CHOKe the life of God?

→ Does this metaphor extend effectively into our corporate situation? Could we have a church like that? How would we get there?

- \* What would that place look like? HAVEN of GRACE ... HOTBED of HOLINESS ... HOUSE of WORSHIP & PRAYER.

→ Describe what, in your mind, a haven of grace, a hotbed of holiness and a house of worship & prayer would look like? What could happen in a place like that?