

STREET LIGHTS: LETTING CHRIST SHINE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

"LIGHTING MY NEIGHBORHOOD THROUGH TIME"

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Time - I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes. Colossians 3:17 *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

"Time is money" or so they say, but even if it isn't, it's like money in many respects. I spend it like I do money. And some of that spending is *obligatory* and some is *discretionary*. I eat, sleep, and work; that spending is obligatory. I surf the web, watch TV, and play golf; that spending is discretionary. I do other things, too; I just picked these to make a point, which I think you get by now. Years ago we did a sermon series on the Core Competency Stewardship entitled "I Either Need to Make More Money, Spend Less Money, or Am I Missing Something Here?" The idea being, we need to be good stewards of our money; the same goes for our time.

From what I can tell, time is in shorter supply nowadays than money. Plenty of people with money are all out of time. They have no time left; they're busted. This may explain why it's easier to get people to give away their money for a good cause rather than give away their time for a good cause. They have the money to spare. And so I suspect "time is *more* than money." It's more precious than money. I can make more money; I can't make more time.

All this leads me to believe that a good steward seeks to create more discretionary time, more

disposable time, by eliminating frivolous spending. Here are some examples: 1) give yourself more time by starting your day 15 to 30 minutes earlier, 2) combine trips to the store, the bank, and the mall, 3) run errands with your spouse so you have more time to talk to each other, 4) don't watch TV while you're waiting for your favorite program to come on, 5) say "no" graciously to unwanted invitations, 6) Google "save time" and check out "61 Time Saving Tips." Remember, you can't give away what you don't have.

And a good steward seeks to use that discretionary time wisely by spending it on people. I'm never doing nothing when I'm doing it with someone else. It goes without saying, you can't develop a new relationship or improve an existing relationship by throwing money at it, but you can by investing time in it. Would you like to get to know your neighbor? Spend some time with your neighbor. Would you like to improve your relationship with your children? Spend some time with your children.

A Difficult Situation

You've been talking with your wife about having the neighbors over, but the last time she invited them they had other plans. The other day she talked with Sue and the two of them decided on a week from Friday, a night you both had open on your calendars. She told you, and you were glad.

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Then a couple of days later when Ed, a close friend in your community group, told you he had four tickets to a Mavericks game, and invited you and Ann to dinner and the game, you didn't catch that game day was the same day you were supposed to have the neighbors over. Of course, you accepted his invitation, and of course, you didn't tell Ann until today—Tuesday. Now you have two commitments on Friday night. Ann wants you to cancel dinner and the game with Ed; you would rather she reschedule dinner with the neighbors.

step 1 LOOK CLOSELY – observe what you are reading.

Luke 8:1-15

1After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, 2and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

4While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: 5"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. 6Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. 7Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. 8Still 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."

9His disciples asked him what this parable meant. 10He 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.'"

11"This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12Those 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. 13Those 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. 14The seed that fell among 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. 15But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."

- Record what puzzles you most about this parable.

- Before you decide what it means, look closely at what it says.

- * Circle the temporal connecting words "after this" in v. 1.
- * Bracket the women's names in vv. 2, 3.
- * In the margin next to v. 3 write, "Cf. v. 15."
- * Underline the four places where the seed fell in vv. 5-8.
- * Circle the word "this" in v. 8.
- * Box the word "but" indicating contrast throughout.

- * Highlight v. 10.
- * Draw a line between v. 10 and 11 to separate the parable from its interpretation.
- * Box the words "so that" indicating purpose in vv. 10, and 12.
- * Number the three things that keep "thorny hearers" from maturing in v. 14.

- **Recognizing the message of the passage**

The parable of the soils is about believing and obeying God's word. It's about being a fruit bearing Christ follower. It's safe to assume that a lot of people were hearing the word since "Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God" (v. 1). But not all who heard believed and not all who believed bore fruit—hence his warning to the crowd to listen carefully in verse 18. The parable involves the sower, the seed, and the four different soils.

Jesus explained to his disciples that the seed is the word of God implying that he is the sower who scattered the seed, i.e., proclaimed God's word. The parable's focus, however, is on the soils rather than the seed. Jesus wants his hearers to understand how important their response to his message is! The seed that falls on the path has no chance to germinate since "the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved" (v. 12). Jesus' use of personal pronouns confirms that he is not talking about seed and soil solely; he is talking about how people respond to the word. People represented by the first soil do not believe the word and consequently are not saved.

The seed that falls on the rock germinates, but its growth is short lived because it has no root. People represented by the second soil believe the word and are saved, but when faced with the difficulty of being Christian in a world that is often hostile to Christ followers, their initial desire to grow wanes and they drop out of sight.

The seed that falls among thorns germinates, but it never matures to produce a crop because it can't compete with the encroaching plants for sunlight and nutrients. People represented by the third soil believe the word and are saved, but don't mature spiritually because spiritual growth is not their priority. Instead, they find themselves preoccupied by life's worries, and sidetracked by the pursuit of the good life.

Only the seed that falls on good soil germinates, matures, and produces a crop. People represented by the fourth soil believe the word and are saved, and then go on to mature spiritually and bear fruit. "Only one soil meets the goal for which the seed was planted, the fourth soil" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 230). Hence, only one group of people meets the goal for which the word is proclaimed, those who believe it and mature to bear fruit. No wonder Jesus went on to warn his hearers, "Therefore consider carefully how you listen" (v. 18).

The Message of this Passage
Listen to God's word carefully and obey it faithfully,
and in time you'll bear much fruit.

- **Digging deeper into its meaning**

v. 1 ***some women*** Luke's description of the women who followed Jesus ties this chapter to the previous one (cf. "after this") and anticipates what he had to say about careful listeners (v. 18) who not only hear God's word but also put it into practice (v. 21). The Twelve and the women who supported Jesus and them were truly his "mother and brothers." Including women in his ministry in that day would have been about as scandalous as including tax collectors and sinners in it (cf. Jn 4:27). "We do not find women disciples in the circle of the Twelve (? Apostle) . . . However, women were to be found among the followers of Jesus; they were more prominent than the men in their love, care and courage after the crucifixion (Matt. 27:55 f. par. Mk. 15:40 f., Lk. 23:49; Matt. 28:1 ff. par. Mk. 16:1 ff., Lk. 24:1 ff.)" (C. Brown, *DNNT*, s.v., "gyne, woman").

v. 2 ***this parable*** The parable of the sower, or better yet the parable of the soils, is recorded in vv. 5-8a. Its interpretation follows in vv. 11-15 along with what is usually recognized as another parable, the parable of the lamp, in vv. 16-18. (The close connection between vv. 15 and 16 suggests that vv. 16-18 may belong to the interpretation itself, in which case the so-called parable of the lamp is embedded in the interpretation of the parable of the soils.) Rather than a parable, verses 16-18 actually contain three sayings that have to do "with the reason why someone should heed Jesus' words" (Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, NIBC, 127).

v. 5 **sow** "The imagery draws on standard Palestinian farming practices. Sowing took place from late October to early December. The sower carried a bag of grain, usually slung over his shoulder. He tossed the seed in rows. It is debated whether the seed was sown and then the land was plowed or vice versa, but it makes no difference to the parable" (Bock, 228, 29). Jesus may have had the sowing of barley in mind. Of the two important grains that were planted, wheat and barley, barley could be grown on poorer soil and needed a shorter growing season; it was, however, valued less than wheat (Ralph Grower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, 90).

v. 5 **path** "The seed on the road not only has no chance to become embedded in the ground and draw nutrients from the soil, but it is also trampled upon. The rocky soil, at least in Palestine, is hard to spot, since in the hill country, much topsoil is set thinly over a limestone rock base. Weeds are also plentiful, with some able to grow up to six feet in height" (229).

v. 8 **hundredfold** "The parable speaks of a hundredfold yield, which is not bad in a culture that expected a seven to tenfold yield" (229).

v. 10 **may not see** "The secrets of the kingdom have been given to Jesus' disciples (and here Luke means everyone who will, or has ever, become a follower of Jesus), but for the rest (i.e., those who will not heed the word of God) Jesus' words remain enigmatic parables so that they will understand even less (see v. 18). This is in essence a statement of judgment and all the more reason to listen (vv. 8, 15, 21)" (Evans, 127). In other words, Jesus' disciples were given an understanding of spiritual things that was denied to others.

v. 12 **along the path** "Although the four soils represent various kinds of people, there is a certain looseness in the metaphor, and at times the plants produced by the soils represent the various kinds of people rather than the soils" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 246). It seems better to view the soils as various kinds of responses to the Word of God (i.e., various kinds of listening [v. 18] or various kinds of hearing [v. 21]) that in turn produce plants that represent various kinds of people.

v. 12 **not believe** The contrast in the parable is between those who do not believe and hence are not saved (v. 12), and those who do believe and hence are saved (vv. 13-15).

v. 13 **fall away** According to many commentators those who believe for a while were never saved in the first place. "The second group are those who listen and rejoice but then do not stick with the truth of the message for they have no root (v. 13). The fact that they believe for a while but fall away means that they only accept the facts of the Word mentally and then reject it when 'the going gets rough.' It does not mean they lose their salvation, for they had none to lose" (John A. Martin, "Luke," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 225; cf. Stein, 246, "this faith is not saving faith"). Nevertheless, the context suggests otherwise (cf. note on v. 12). Those in second, third, and fourth groups believe and are saved, but only those in the fourth group go on to maturity and produce abundant fruit. "Life's worried, riches, and pleasures" keep those in the third group from maturing. Testing keeps those in the second group from maturing. Luke is concerned that his readers not only hear God's word (i.e., believe God's word) but also put it into practice (cf. v. 21). Put differently, the subject of the parable is more specifically discipleship rather than salvation.

v. 15 **persevering** Fruit bearing is a function of obedience over time. "It takes time to bear fruit, just as it takes time for weeds to choke the seed or for the lack of root in a plant to become evident. Jesus' point deals with how response to the Word is a product of a process" (Bock, 230).

• Answering Interpretive Questions

1. Luke could have gone from the first sentence in chapter 8 directly to the opening sentence in verse 4 and excluded the part about The Twelve and the women who were with him in verses 1b-3. Why didn't he? What do you think?

2. To whom did Jesus tell the parable of the soils?
3. List the four kinds of soil on which the farmer's seed fell.
4. Put the expression, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" in contemporary terms.
5. Explain the *contrast* in verse 10.
6. What makes people in the first group different from people in the other three groups?
7. What causes people in the second group to fall away?
8. What keeps people in the third group from maturing?
9. Believers in group two "fall away" in the time of testing. In light the words "do not mature" in verse 14 and "produce a crop" in verse 15, what do you think "fall away" means?
10. Given the elements in the parable, to what does producing a crop refer?
11. **Discussion:** What kind of soil are you?

step **3** **RESPOND WISELY** – apply what you have read.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Family Activity** (for those who have a family living at home)

Operation Christmas child is in full swing at Pantego. This is a great opportunity to take time this week and take your family to the store, purchase some plastic shoe boxes and let your children fill them with items for a child within their own age range/gender. Before you go, explain the purpose of what your are doing and give them the list of acceptable and unacceptable items. Remind them that the items must fit in the box. You might need to give them a budget, too. Look at their choices and praise their efforts. After you are home, pack the boxes and prepare them for delivery according to the instructions. Include a card with your child's picture and greeting in each box. Pray over the boxes, praying for the children and families they will reach. Have fun!

- **Home Group Discussion** (for those involved in the deeper connections of a home group)

Read Luke 8.1-15. Tonight, rather than focusing on what type of soil we are or beating ourselves up over not being better soil, let's ask three questions. Reread verse 15. First, what tangible steps can you take with your time in order to better "hear the word?" Second, what are some of the ways you best "retain" God's instruction for your life? Third, how is God challenging you right now to "persevere" in your pursuit of relationship with Him? After people share the answers to these three questions, spend time praying for specific ways to invest greater time to "sowing seed" on your Street.

- **Community intentionality** (for those with a desire to reach out in their community)

This week's suggestion is simple. Go for a walk in your neighborhood-before it gets dark-and spend time talking to any neighbors who happen to be out at the time. Stop, introduce yourself, and tell them where you live. To get them talking you might ask them how long they've lived in the neighborhood or you might ask them about their family.

“Lighting My Neighborhood Through Time”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

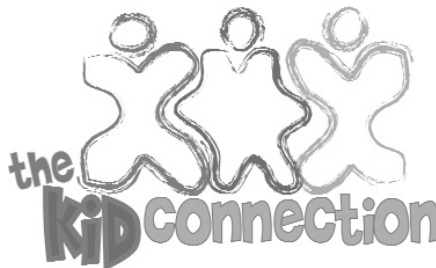
step 4 Connect the **FAMILY**.

Experience it!

Experience scripture through the activity-based learning exercise. Dinner is a perfect time to engage the family.

Read Luke 8:1-15.

Emphasize that the seed in the good soil took time to produce a huge harvest. Put a can of biscuits in the oven to cook. Make the family watch the biscuits slowly cook. They will become disinterested (and go crazy!) waiting patiently. As you enjoy the fully cooked biscuits remind the family to be patient waiting for God's love to reach those around them.



Pray it!

Pray God's will for your child by praying scriptures. Insert your child's name in the blanks as you pray.

Father, I pray whatever _____ does or says, she will do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus.

Colossians 3:17 (NLT)

Post it!

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the memory verse throughout the house. Lead your children to interact with them as they memorize.

Giving Away My Time - I sacrifice my time to help with God's work.

Memory Verse- "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."
Mt 5:16

Discuss it!

Discover biblical truth by discussing the scripture. Reflective questions are great with older kids.

Describe the four types of soil Jesus identified. What does the good soil represent?
How long did it take for the thorns to choke out the seed?
Why did the people have to "patiently" wait for a huge harvest?

Live it!

Live out the Core Competency and build deeper relationships by doing this activity.

It's been four weeks since you began praying for your three neighbors. Is your family getting impatient waiting for something to happen? Plant some seeds in four different containers. Place one of them in a prominent location in the house. As the new plant slowly grows, continue to intentionally be a light to those around you. Take the other three to the neighbors you are praying for.



Challenge

Kids preschool through sixth grade receive Kid Pix Tokens for each discipleship activity completed.

Family completes **Experience It** _____ Child memorizes kid-friendly **Core Competency** _____

Family participates in **Live It** _____ Child memorizes **Memory Verse** _____

Kids can earn extra tokens on Sunday morning by:

Bringing a friend to **The Kid Connection** _____ Completing **KIDZ Bulletin** _____

Child's name _____ Parent's signature _____

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

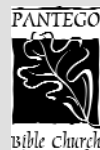
Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.