

FLOURISHING IN GRAD SCHOOL  
WEEK 1: CONSIDER THE SOIL

*"The Christian faith has not been tried and found wanting.  
It has been found difficult and left untried."* - G. K. Chesterton

Mark 4: 1 - 10, 14 - 20

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge.<sup>2</sup> He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said:<sup>3</sup> "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.<sup>5</sup> Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

<sup>9</sup>Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

<sup>10</sup>When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables.

<sup>14</sup>The farmer sows the word.<sup>15</sup> Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. <sup>16</sup>Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. <sup>17</sup>But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>18</sup>Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; <sup>19</sup>but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>20</sup>Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

Have someone read the passage out loud. Give everyone five or so minutes on their own to review it. Invite study members to note things that stand out and add a comment or question about it on their sheet.

### Discussion Questions

The parable in verses 1 - 9 talks about seed, soil, and fruitfulness. What is the same in each scenario? What is different? How does the difference affect the outcome?

In verse 10, Mark tells us Jesus is asked about the meaning of the parable. What explanation does Jesus give of the different types of soils and what they illustrate? What prevents fruitfulness? What is the key to producing a good crop?

The seed doesn't change in the parable, but the ground does. The growth is dependent on the soil's readiness to receive the seed, and as Jesus makes clear, you are the ground and the seed is his Word. What kind of soil are you right now? Are you currently the kind of soil that will produce a good crop?

Look again at verses 17 - 19. What challenges or distractions do you anticipate as you begin graduate school? In light of these, what "gardening" do you need to do right now and what will you need to do as the semester unfolds?

Are there other things you want to note or questions you have from the passage?

Spend a few minutes filling in the table below. Discuss this final question together and then pray for one another and for this group. How might this group contribute to your growth? How can we support one another along the way?

<i>What might inhibit your growth this year?</i>	<i>How could participation in this group help?</i>