

Mark 4 (Part 1) - To Tremble At God's Word

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Can I ask you a question? Have you ever wondered why it is that some Christians seem to grow in their faith at breakneck speed and others don't? Have you ever wondered about that? I have to tell you, I've wondered about that... a lot. I've also wondered about why some people get really excited about Jesus and they make a big splash coming to the Lord and they're like, wow, Jesus is the greatest! And then a few weeks later, you never see them again. People wonder where is so-and-so. They're gone.

And then there are others who come to Christ and they go through that same kind of period of excitement like anybody else. After that initial honeymoon period dies down a little bit, they just settle into a life of service and growth, and serving in whatever way they find themselves to serve, and they just keep walking with God. They're those steady Eddie's.

Have you ever wondered why? Have you ever wondered why different growth happens at different levels. Why some people don't even want to hear about God; why some people will hear the Gospel, and even seem excited about it, and then it's like they get a spiritual flat tire after that?

Anyway, the reason I asked those questions is because we're going to cover the first half of Mark chapter 4 here this morning, and we're going to be hearing all about this. In fact this whole section, the first 25 verses is what we're going to cover.

And we're going to be seeing here why some Christians explode in growth; why some Christians explode in excitement, but never grow, in fact, even fall away. We're going to learn things today that we couldn't know apart from Jesus telling us these things.

One of the reasons I like to go through the parables in the Gospel accounts is that we learn things in these parables that we could have absolutely no knowledge of if Jesus hadn't revealed them to us. Which is extremely cool because I would hate to think that these things would remain mysteries and we would never know what they were all about. So let's pray first.

Father, open our hearts to the ministry of Your Word. And as we're going to hear many times here in this Scripture, give us ears to hear, give us eyes to see, give us a heart, Lord God, that is responsive and ready to embrace Your Word. We ask it all in Jesus' Name, amen.

Verse 1. *"...He..."* Of course we're talking about Jesus. *"Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land."*² *And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them:*³ *"Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow."* (ESV)

Stop there for just a moment. It's very cool that Jesus is using these kinds of examples because He lived in an area and at a time when everybody would understand and had it in their mind, an idea of somebody who went out to sow seed. What we're talking about is people that go out and plant.

We obviously plant seed very differently in our agricultural scenarios today. But back in those days, it would be as common as the day is long to see someone out with a pouch over their shoulder full of seed. And you'd see the person reaching in with their hand, grabbing a handful and just scattering that seed as they walked along. That's the way they planted their fields. It wasn't super scientific.

We think of farming in rows. You know, that's not the way farming was back in the day. There were no rows; they just scattered seeds and stuff came up all over the place. So this was something that the people would be very familiar with. And you can imagine somebody scattering seed in that way; a lot of it's going to go in places they probably didn't intend it to go.

Let's keep going here. Verse 4. It says, *"And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, (that refers to the footpath that people would walk on) and the birds came and devoured it."*⁵ *Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil."*⁶ *And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away."*⁷ *Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain."*⁸ *And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."*⁹ *And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve (so it's the twelve plus) asked him about the parables." Matthew, in Matthew's account, he actually gives us the question that the disciples asked Jesus about this parable

and the question was basically, (*Why do you speak to the people in parables?*)” (Matthew 13:10) What's that all about?

¹¹ And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, ¹² so that

“they may indeed see but not perceive,
and may indeed hear but not understand,
lest they should turn and be forgiven.”

Mark gives us Jesus' answer in verse 11, “*And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside (I want you to take special note of that word, outside—for those outside) everything is in parables, ¹² so that “‘they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.’”*

All right, stop there for just a moment. Here's another question. Have you ever wondered why people can sit in church, hear God's Word taught over and over and over again and never get it? This parable helps us to understand some of that, too.

The first thing that the disciples asked Jesus is, why parables? Why are you teaching in parables? Why not just come out and say it straight? And Jesus begins to explain to them that parables create a spiritual sifting process that will either reward the hearer or baffle the hearer, depending on whether they're on the inside or whether they're on the outside.

What is it that makes somebody on the inside? What is it that makes somebody on the outside? It's whether they want to hear. It's really as simple as that. There's no elite special group where you get the tattoo, the password, and the special beanie cap that says, I'm in. There's nothing like that going on.

Those who are on the inside, as far as understanding His Word; understanding the Scriptures, are those who have simply come to Him, humbled their hearts and said, I want to know, I want to know what the Word has to say. I want to understand the Scriptures. I am open. I humble myself. I come to You and I say, Lord, without You, there's no way I will know. So I come to You that I might learn.

You might think, Well, duh! Doesn't everybody do that? No. Everybody does not do that. Some people come to church and they basically do this (Pastor Paul frowns and folds his arms across his chest) and you understand the body

language involved in that. I, if you're cold and doing that, I don't necessarily think that you're being hard hearted.

But this posture sometimes suggests that I'm here, but I don't really care to listen. And it's like, (Pastor Paul snores) Word of God. That's the way I was for about the first 18 years of my life. I went to church and I hated it. Of course I went to a very liberal church. My parents attended a very religious a place and I didn't have any place in my heart for religion. I still don't.

But it was just all one big fat bore as far as I was concerned. And there wasn't any listening going on. You don't go to church to, you go to church to play or make jokes or... It's a good thing I didn't have a smartphone back then. But for those who simply come to God and say, I want to know, I want to know. You're already on the inside and you know what? You will know.

But boy, I tell you, there are so many people that listen, but don't hear— because they don't want to hear; they just want to be mad. Our YouTube channel, which has all of our videos from Sunday and Wednesday, attracts some interesting people from time to time. And I get some pretty wild comments as you can well imagine.

They come from around the world and like I've said to you guys before, the people who make comments that are derogatory and hurtful and just dumb, they don't see the light of day as far as other people. But I read them. I had one just this last week where some gal listened to one of my teachings; I think it was in Genesis.

And she just ripped it, but you could tell there was a heart that just didn't want to know. This God— you serve is a God who looks a blind eye when people get raped and murdered and all this stuff. And she was just angry. You know what I mean? She was an angry person.

And I'm thinking, first of all, why are you on our YouTube channel? But second of all, I'm thinking, you've heard the Word of God. You've obviously read it, but you didn't understand it. You didn't open your heart to it. You basically opened the Bible to see what you could find fault with.

Have you ever met those kinds of people? I'm going to read the Bible, but only so that I can figure out what I could throw darts at. There's never a heart to be open and receptive and responsive and say, God, I humble myself. Teach me; if there's any truth here, teach me.

There are great many people who walk into a reading of the Bible convinced before they even open the thing, there is no truth here. (Pastor holds up his Bible) There's none. And so then they open it up and they begin to read it. And what do they get? They get nothing or all they get are things to throw stones at. That's it.

And you know it's interesting that Jesus makes this statement about parables and He says, here's why I teach in parables— so that you guys on the inside who want to know; you're following Me. You're listening, you're saying, talk to me about these parables here.

Anybody could have done that. Anybody could have walked up to Jesus and said, okay, that parable tweaked me a little bit. You need to explain that. He'd be more than happy. You want to know what that parable means? Sit down, we'll talk.

But the rest of the people are just okay. Yeah. Interesting. What's for dinner? And they just go on with their lives or just like, boy, I didn't understand that; that guy talks in circles. Forget this. I'm going home.

Never any desire, never any pushing in to know, to understand, to grasp. And so for those people, the Word of God remains a closed book. It remains a mystery. They say, I've read the Bible. I just don't get it. I just don't get it.

You know why they don't get it? They don't want to get it. Because their heart isn't open. There's not a response there. But I want to repeat to you, for anyone with a heart to learn, God is always quick to give ears to hear. That's why we pray before we get into the Word, God, give us ears to hear. Because He will honor that prayer, every time.

When we get to this parable of the sower in Matthew's account, let me show you on the screen here, what Matthew records for us. Jesus actually says to His disciples and those listening,

Matthew 13:16-17 (ESV)

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. (Why? Because they're on the inside; they're pressing in. He says) For truly, I say to

you, many prophets and righteous people long to see what you see, and did not see it, and longed to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Why did those prophets and righteous people not get a chance to hear it? Because they were waiting for Messiah. But now He's here. Now Messiah is here and you can come, you can walk right up to Him and say, talk to me, tell me what's going on here; explain this to me. Sure, sit down. Let's talk.

But it's interesting when somebody doesn't want to know the answer, guess what they're going to get from Jesus? Pontius Pilate asked Jesus one of the most penetrating powerful questions that you can ask God. And he was sitting there, literally in front of God incarnate, Jesus Christ. And he asked one of the most powerful questions you can ask: *"What is truth?"* (John 18:38)

Do you remember? Do you remember what Jesus said? Nothing. Jesus didn't respond with a syllable. And do you know why? Because Pilate wasn't wanting an answer. And that's the way God responds. When we come to Him and we purport to ask a question, but we really don't want to know.... Have you ever had somebody come up to you and say, okay, you're a Christian, right? Yeah.

And you know what's coming. All right. All right. There's something I don't understand. They'll say, if you're a Christian and you believe in the Bible... And then they start.

You know at the outset, they don't want an answer. And even if you give them one, they're not going to listen. Right? And if you do, they're just going to go, That's stupid. Right? Has that ever happened to you? Happens to me from time to time, but you know exactly what's going on.

I'm learning in my older age to just not even go there with people. When they say something and you respond and they come back with a statement that says I'm closed; this door is closed.

I've gotten to the point where I'm starting to actually exercise some self-control and just drop it and just quit the conversation at that point. Just go, God bless you. Because you know what? Otherwise I'm just sitting here wasting my breath. Wha-wha-wha-wha-wha. And it's going nowhere.

So let's look at the explanation to this parable. Verse 13, *"And he said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?'"* And that's an interesting statement to say: This is a parable that is going to provide a key that is going to help you to understand all the parables.

When you get this one it will be a glass through which you can look at all of the parables and have a greater understanding. So get this one and it's going to go good for you.

All right. So He says, here we go. Verse 14, “*The sower sows the* (What? Seed? No, He says, no, it's the) *word.*” What we're talking about here is the seed is a picture of the Word of God. All right. So the seed that is being spread is the Word.

Verse 15, *And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.*” Why? Because this is seed that gets scattered and they didn't mean to scatter it on the path, but it ends up on the footpath. Let me show you on the screen what Matthew records about this.

Matthew 13:19 (ESV)

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, that's key, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, that's key, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. (And that) This is what was sown along the path.

Notice that interesting insight that Matthew records for us. This is Word that goes into their lives, but they don't get it. They don't understand it.

Why don't they understand it? Well again, remember something: this parable is about different heart conditions. I'm not talking about heart conditions where your physical heart doesn't pump right; I'm talking about conditions of your spiritual heart that create either a place where the Word can get in and become rooted or not.

So the footpath in ancient Israel, the footpath— they didn't have sidewalks, but there were places that people just walked over and over and over again. And so the ground would become so hard it was literally like concrete. It would be just as easy for a seed to get into this floor as it would on the footpath back in those days.

So the seed hit a place where there was no place for it to enter in. Isn't that an interesting thought as it relates to human hearts? In the same way, there are hearts that are so hard that there's no place for the Word to get in. The Word hits

those hearts just like it hits any other heart, but there's no place. There's no place to actually plant the seed because the heart is hard. So the first condition we see is a HARD heart.

- ◆ The HARD heart
- ◆ The SHALLOW heart
- ◆ The CROWDED heart
- ◆ The OPEN, RECEPTIVE heart

Let's move on. Verse 16, *“And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy.”* Look at this: they're thrilled when they hear the Word.

But he says, *“¹⁷ And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the Word, immediately they fall away.”* Stop there.

The next heart condition that Jesus is making us aware of is what we call the shallow believer, the SHALLOW heart. Because this is seed that is sown on—when He says rocky soil, He means that there's dirt... When you look at it, you can't see the rocks because there's a thin layer of dirt and you look at that area just like the good soil and it all looks the same to you.

But you go down just that far and there's rocks underneath there. In fact, there's bedrock. It's hard pan, we call it. And we see that a lot around here. And so He's basically saying there's no room for this to grow because there's a shallowness to this kind of ground.

Notice that He says that the seed germinates, but there's no place for the root to really get in and anchor the plant. So there's a germination that takes place. He says the people receive it with joy. They're like, yay, God's cool. So cool. His Word. Wow, this is great.

Have you ever seen people like that? They get excited and they're just like, yes. And He says, then there, because of the shallowness, because there's no place for the root to grow; no depth in their lives for the Word of God, they have no place to hear and store up what has been sown in their lives and they quickly fall away when trouble or hardship arise.

Notice in verse 17. Look with me again in your Bible. Notice where the trouble comes from. It's trouble or hardship that comes on account of the Word. Did you catch that? On account of the Word.

See this is the person who is basically willing, or I should say unwilling, to suffer any kind of inconvenience or discomfort because they're a believer. And it happens, even for those of us in the United States where we have such wonderful freedoms. Sometimes in work, family, hanging out with friends, or whatever—people can treat us differently when we come to Christ.

And there can be a form of mistreatment that comes into the life of a Believer. But these people here who are shallow of heart care too much about what other people think, frankly. And the possibility of being seen in a bad light is just too much for them to bear. And so it causes them to just pitch the whole thing and say, yeah, I don't think so. I don't think so.

I'll never forget a number of years ago when I was a youth pastor, back in my, back in the early days— I had a gal in my youth group who was active; involved in the youth group, but one day I found myself in her school. I don't know why I was there; I forget exactly why I had to go to the school. And I saw her in the hall and she went out of her way.

She was with her friends and she was a very pretty girl and I could tell she was part of the in crowd and when she saw me walking down the hall, she made a beeline to get out of the way so that nobody would recognize her with. I could tell she didn't want to have to explain This is my youth pastor. I think church was one of those things that at school we don't talk about because that might possibly reflect badly on me and I might become a little less popular with my friends. This is what Jesus is talking about here. This person who's shallow in their heart.

Let's go on. Jesus says in verse 18, *“And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word,¹⁹ but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.”*

And so this is the third heart condition that Jesus is revealing for us here; one where the seed never even really has a fighting chance to grow at all. This person may recognize the Word of God. They don't really have any trouble recognizing it. They'll even say, yeah, that's the Word of God.

But their hearts are so tied to this world, you see. They care too much about money. They care way too much about being popular and fame and all the other things that the world would draw us to love. They care about those things and they want to be rich. These are the kind of people that say I'm going to make my first million by age 25 and just go from there.

The heart of the world and the desire for riches and the things that go along with it are just deeply ingrained in their hearts. And so they hear the Word of God and yet their heart is already overcrowded with desires from this world.

Verse 20, *“But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”*

Finally we come to the good soil, which is of course the heart that is receptive to God's Word, that has ample room for growth. You'll notice that the result is... what happens? The seed gets in there, takes root, grows, bears fruit. That's good soil.

And then of course that is the heart that is open; humble and teachable. This is the person on the inside that Jesus was talking about earlier: the person who comes to Him and says I want to know. I want to learn. I want to grow. It's not the person who exhibits these other forms of conditions.

So we end up with these four heart conditions. Just as a reminder, a summary, let me put them up on the screen for you.

- ◆ The HARD heart
- ◆ The SHALLOW heart
- ◆ The CROWDED heart
- ◆ The OPEN, RECEPTIVE heart

You have the hard heart. You have the shallow heart. You have the crowded heart. And you have the open heart, the open receptive heart. Here's my question to you. Which one are you? I think that's one of the reasons why Jesus is giving us this parable— that we might look at it.

Now, to be honest, as insightful as this parable is, and I love it; it just gives me all kinds of insights about why people are sometimes the way they are. It also generates some questions. Have you noticed? For example, I ask the question: How does a person end up with a hard heart anyway? How does the person get a shallow heart?

I think we probably know how a person's heart becomes overcrowded, but here's the real question: Can something be done about a heart that is not receptive to God's Word or is not an environment where the Word is going to be attracted to it? In other words, is it possible to bring about any change for the better?

If you recognize, for example, and God's Word convicts you in this, and you're like you know what? I'll be honest with you. My heart's pretty crowded, a pretty crowded place. I mean, that would take a lot for somebody to admit that, I think. I think it would be even probably more so for somebody to say, I'll be honest with you, my heart's pretty shallow when it comes to the Word of God, or something like that.

So can you do something about it? If you discover that your heart is not the perfect place for the Word of God to get in and germinate and that sort of thing?

Well, frankly, this parable doesn't answer the question to be honest with you. In fact, the sole point of this parable seems to be just to tell us that our hearts do vary in condition and that those various conditions govern our response to the Word of God. Accordingly, we have to actually look elsewhere in the Word to answer some of these questions. Can you do something about a heart that isn't in prime condition to hear the Word of God?

But what we find in examples from the Scripture are that many times God allows things. I'm not saying He brings things necessarily, but I am saying that He allows things in our lives, in the form of humbling circumstances many times to do just that— to change the condition of our heart and to make us more receptive.

Frankly that's one of the reasons why when we see somebody with a hard heart or a shallow heart we pray. We pray for them; God just change their heart; change their heart. Lord let the Word of God— let them be receptive and open to hear Your Word.

So we're praying that God would change hearts. So we must believe that it's possible for those changes to take place. But what do we see in life? And what do we see in the Word?

Many times we have to hit rock bottom sometimes. I don't think it has to happen always that way. It did for me. It did for me, and I'm willing to bet if I gave some of you an opportunity to stand up and talk about how Jesus got a hold of your heart, most of— well, I don't know about most— a portion of you, maybe even a healthy portion of you, would be able to get up and talk about how God had to bring you pretty low in order to change the condition or the receptivity of your heart to a place where you were really hearing and open and responsive, right?

I hate to think we— I think we should all hate to think— that it takes a tragedy to get our attention. What a horrible thought: I just basically go from one tragedy to the next in my life. I'm just waiting for the next tragedy to happen so I can start growing in Jesus. That's a pretty depressing idea. And yet sometimes that's what it takes.

But as I said, it doesn't always have to take that. I think somebody can hear and they can say, You know what? I need to change. And I'm going to offer up my heart to the Lord and I'm going to ask Him to change it into a receptive heart. I believe that the Lord would honor that prayer: God, make my heart receptive.

If you realize the Word just isn't really making an impact on my life like it should. First of all, to even make that confession, God's already got to be working in your heart. But if you recognize that it's just not having the impact that it should, pray and ask Him to soften your heart; make it more receptive.

Look what He goes on to say in verse 21; this is interesting. *“And he said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand?”* In other words, not in a place in the room where it's going to give light.

Obviously you turn on a lamp so that it illuminates the room. Right? To cover it up would defeat the idea of lighting the lamp in the first place. And yet there are many Christians who hear the Word of God... and then they cover it up. They literally cover up their Christian existence to avoid standing out as a Christian. They're trying to blend in or something like that.

And sometimes we have to look on the inside and we have to ask, why am I perhaps hiding? Why am I may be hiding the light that would otherwise be shining in my life? Am I just embarrassed? Like I was talking about that young girl many years ago? Are we just embarrassed that people might find out that we actually believe in the Bible? Yeah, I'm one of those.

Are we afraid of what people are going to think, or maybe even how it's going to affect our business. If people found out I was a Christian and who I voted for, I might not get any business. You've probably noticed people are reacting very badly. Maybe we're not shining our light because we have that overcrowded condition where we're too busy doing and thinking about other things.

Look what He goes on to say in verse 22, *“For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light.”* In other words, God's Word is meant to be understood. If it seems hidden now, don't think that

it's hidden because God doesn't want you to know. If it's hidden to you, it's because there's a block on your end of the situation. He says, listen, nothing is hidden that isn't meant to be revealed.

There are a lot of things we don't get, but if there's a problem here, it's not because God is withholding information. It's because we're not open and responsive and seeking to know. Here's the point: Truth is made to be known. We've got to believe that as Christians: Truth is made to be known. God doesn't have truth just so He can keep it from you.

When I was a kid, I used to enjoy keeping secrets. Remember how we used to say to our siblings, when we'd know something that we heard our parents talking about; we go to our siblings— and I had three siblings— I know something you don't know. Right?

And that was something for me as the youngest in the family. Of course, my brother, he'd just say, Tell me, or I'll pound it out of you— and usually would. But, yeah. It was always empowering to say, I know something you don't know.

We think it's cool to withhold stuff. God says, Listen, truth is meant to be revealed. Right? Look at what He says in verse 23, *“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

What do you need to hear the truth? Ears to hear. How do you get ears to hear? You ask God. It's not rocket science, you guys, and it's not this hard— there are some people who believe that only the elite and the highly educated can truly understand the Word of God. And if you had a PhD like me, you poor people. Aren't you glad that I'm here to tell you what's what?

Right? No, a child can understand the Scriptures and they usually do..., better than some adults. Because their hearts are open and what it takes to have ears to hear is simply an open heart. God, I want to hear. I want to hear. I want to hear Your voice. If you come to God with humility and say, God, unstop my ears. Just stand back.

There is an incredible— I know I've quoted James or Matthew a lot here this morning and I'm not done. Check this out. Great promise. Matthew chapter 7.

Matthew 7:8 (ESV)

For anyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and the one who knocks it will be opened.

For anyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks (What are they going to just keep searching forever? And go, gee, I can't find this anywhere. No, He says they will) finds, and the one who knocks (listen, Jesus says) it will be opened.

That's a promise from the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And He says, Listen, all you've got to do is look and ask and knock and I'll open!

It's not like He's standing behind a locked door saying, Who is it? Do you have the right password? He's like, I want to open this door! If you would just knock!

Now notice that knocking process, it's not just this, nobody's there. You know how some people do when they knock on your door and they really don't want—Have you ever done that? You go to somebody's door and you don't want them to answer the door so you go up there and [quietly] tap, tap, tap; they're not home. So we're going to go now....

We're talking about pressing in. In fact, there's this proverb that I love that talks about pressing in. Can I share it with you? It's in Proverbs chapter 2 on the screen.

Proverbs 2:1-5 (NIV)

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

My son, (Girls here too. Fine; no problem) if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

What does it take? A quick knock, a tap on the door? No, He's not home. I went to church once, or you get people, I read the Bible once. It was dumb. It was stupid. Yeah, they... sure. You can read the Bible and come away thinking it's stupid. You can do that.

You know why? Your heart wasn't open. There was no receptivity. You didn't knock. You didn't search; you didn't look: you breezed. What is this Proverb

saying? Look at all the action terms that are used in there: accept, store up, turn, apply, call out, cry aloud. And look at this, *“if you look for it or search for it as for silver and hidden treasure.”* Boy, that one hits us where we live, doesn't it?

If you put as much time searching in God's Word, as you did for just the right lottery number combinations, you'd be growing in your faith. Right? There's a lot of things in life we seek after; we search for, and if we just put that kind of effort into knowing God and His Word— wow.

But what do we do? We end up relying on other people. We want to go to a Bible study, but have everybody— have the teacher do all the study. They're going to do all the work. I'm going to come and just be a receiver. How about digging in on your own?

Finally look at verse 24 here in your Bible. *“And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.””*

In other words, a Believer grows in understanding and knowledge in direct proportion to how much they ponder and apply what they've already received. You received the Word of God. What do you do with it? What do you do with it? Because when you receive it, it's yours. But what do you do with it?

It blesses me so much— we've got some parents in our fellowship who say— I've had some dads even come up to me after the service and say, when we get out of church and when we're going home with our kids, we talk to them about what we heard in church. We actually discuss what you taught on. And so I have a question about such and thus or whatever. And it blesses me all to pieces. Because what are they doing? They're taking what they heard and they're pondering it.

What Jesus is saying here is basically, pay attention to what you have or what you've received because with the measure that you ponder and focus and open your heart to that, it will be measured to you. But if you're not pondering at all, listen, that's a very small measuring thing in your own life, and it will only be measured to you in that same small way. You'll only receive small bits because you're only open to pondering or applying small bits of the Word of God in your life. You see?

That's what He's basically saying here. And He says, but if you open up and you respond and you ponder, He says, hey, still more will be added to you. God will just continue to give you more insight. And what's the result?

He says, verse 25, *“For to the one who has, (That's because they've pondered and opened their heart and said, Jesus, give me ears to hear) more will be given, ...”* That's a promise: *“...more will be given.”* But here's the negative side, *“and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away,”*

Because he hasn't pondered. Because he hasn't applied. Because he hasn't opened his heart to what he did receive, even that will be taken away and it'll be like he never learned it in the first place. I went to church and I forgot what they talked about. Oh, well, who's playing today on TV? You know what I mean? Because there was never any application. There was never any running after truth, seeking after truth.

And eventually God takes away even what they did receive. So is it possible for somebody to go to church and walk away and be a blank slate? Yeah. Yeah, it is.

I want to just end here this morning by going back to the words of Jesus in verse 24. Would you look with me? We're going to end with this. Because in verse 24, Jesus starts off there by saying, pay attention. And those are important words to look at.

If you have an NIV sitting on your lap, your Bible says, *“Consider carefully.”* If you have a New American Standard Bible on your lap, it says, *“Take care.”* If you have a New King James that you're looking at, your Bible says, *“Take heed.”*

The Greek word, and it's just one Greek word, *blepō* means to look at carefully. To look at carefully. And that's what we're supposed to do with the Word of God.

I want to close with a quick passage from Isaiah, and we'll end with this.

Isaiah 66:2 (NIV)

“Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD. “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.”

“Has not My hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD. “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My Word.”