

Life Change from the Heart
“Step 6: Preparing the Garden”
Mark 4:1-8, 13-20
For the Week of November 20, 2016
New City Church of LA

GROW & SERVE GROUP GUIDE AND HOMEWORK

Open in Prayer

Worship

Go around and share 2 things you are thankful for.

Sermon Reflection

“Life Change from the Heart” is a sermon series on how God changes us from the heart through the gospel. How does change from the heart happen? After we surrender our life to God, we start the process of cleaning the inside of the cup, our heart. We go through an extensive process of self-examination to find self-indulgence in our heart. Then, we confess what we find to God, ourselves, and to another person. Step 6, the subject of this week’s sermon, is about repentance, changing the posture of our heart. Although repentance is a separate step, it is really a continuation of self-examination and confession. As we begin to see how self-indulgent our heart has been, we start the process of changing the posture of our heart from being self-indulgent to seeking God’s grace. We don’t just repent of our behavior (our bad habits, our anger, our alcoholism, our sinful lifestyle, etc.); we repent of various ways in which we have self-indulged: self-pity, self-centeredness, dishonesty, sloth, pride, etc. We repent of our heart’s biggest idol: self; then, we open our hearts towards God. The parable of the sower helps us understand our part of preparing our soil—our heart—to the work of God, the Great Gardener.

Any questions or comments about the sermon?

Bible Study

Read Mark 4:1-8, 13-20.

1. What does the soil in general stand for in this parable? What does the seed stand for? Who is the gardener?

2. What does it mean to say that the soil of our heart is like a path? What happens to seeds that were sown on the path? Why do you think the path never takes the seeds?

3. Share about a time in your life when the soil of your heart was indifferent to the work of God in your life.
4. What does it mean to say that the soil of your heart is like rocky places? Why do you think that the seeds that fell on rocky places do not produce fruit?
5. How might people who get stuck in steps 1-3 (sometimes called “the 3-step waltz” by those in 12-Step recovery), but never get to steps 4-7 be like those in rocky places?
6. Share about a time in your life when the soil of your heart was stuck in shallow spirituality that never went deeper than a few emotional experiences that did not result in lasting life change.
7. What does it mean to say that the soil of your heart is like soil among thorns?
8. Share about a time in your life when the desires for wealth and the worries of your life prevented you from finding lasting life change.
9. What does it mean to say that the soil of your heart is good? What are some characteristics of good soil?
10. How can deep self-examination and confession of your self-indulgences lead you to repentance, a change in the posture of your heart to being open to God’s work in your life?

Share how you are doing this week with one another

Pray for one another, the church, and our neighborhood