

# Awkward Conversations.

(something needs to change)

## SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM / WEEK FIVE

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 8:1-15 // The Parable  
**BIG IDEA FOR THE SERIES:** Jesus desires dramatic change in the status quo.  
**THIS WEEK'S BIG IDEA:** The Gospel needs to be received.

### CULTURAL CONTEXT

**The Setting:** Jesus continues to teach in the Galilee region. While there were many cities in the area, agricultural lands were also abundant. Jesus draws on functions and imagery familiar to his listeners.

**The Story:** Jesus employs a culturally unique form of story-telling called “parables.” These stories convey an ethical insight or moral teaching encased in a tale about everyday scenarios. Jesus’ parables have been considered the most sophisticated ones of the first-century.

Jesus’ use of parables spotlights his tight ties to his Jewish culture and to the fact that he would have been teaching in Hebrew. While no story parables exist in Aramaic, Greek or Latin, thousands of Hebrew parables are preserved in Rabbinic literature<sup>1</sup>.

Typically the teacher shares the meaning of his parable, but Jesus reserves this for disciples—for those who show an acute desire to learn. This parable was a critical one; it is recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15).

**The Sower:** Seed was scattered by hand in the first-century eastern Mediterranean. This relatively haphazard approach had natural liabilities. Since footpaths and roads often cut through crops, it was typical for some seed to be trampled. The land was also chock-full of rocks and numerous types of thistles that thrive in that region. These common challenges provided Jesus with a four-fold motif.

### BIBLICAL INTENT/IMPLICATIONS

Jesus didn’t desire to collect a crowd, but was intent on creating a movement. Whenever his popularity seemed to expand, he called people to act on hard truth. If they only came to see and hear – and not do – they would become blind and deaf right in his midst.

So Jesus shares a parable about how people receive God’s Word, and ultimately he is giving them a picture of what it takes to follow him. He shows a progression from one who is rootless to one who is so grounded that she/he produces a bumper crop.

What distinguishes the good soil from the others is this: the capacity to not only hear God’s word, but to steward it by putting it into action.

This theme of hearing and doing courses throughout Scripture. The Hebrew word for hear (shema) also means obey. There was to be no difference between what you received from God and how you acted before God. The challenge of Jesus’ message emerges in vivid color when Jesus encounters the Rich Young Ruler (Luke 18:18-25). While this ruler had kept the commands of Scripture (the Torah) since his youth, there was something holding him back from fully experiencing the Kingdom of God. The good soil of his heart had made space for thorns (attachment to wealth, status and worldly luxuries). Jesus says that the good soil is a good and noble heart willing to persevere, to hear, and to obey no matter the cost.

## Series Outline:

Week One: The Homecoming (4:14-30)  
Week Two: The Moving On (4:38-44)  
Week Three: The Centurion (7:1-10)  
Week Four: The Funeral (7:11-17)  
> **Week Five: The Parable (8:1-15)** <  
Week Six: The Prayer (11:1-13)  
Week Seven: The Obstacle (18:18-30)  
Week Eight: The Return (24:13-35)

## HOW TO USE THIS CURRICULUM WITH YOUR SMALL GROUP

Encourage members to read the Scripture before group; if they weren’t at Warehouse on Sunday they can download the mp3 at [www.warehouse242.org](http://www.warehouse242.org). During group read the passage together. Have extra Bibles available to ensure that everyone has a copy. The goal of Scripture—and of this discussion material—is not information expansion but rather increased intimacy with the Father, Son and Spirit. It’s God who enables that to happen, so be sure to pray for divine insight as you move through Scripture.

## COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

> While we each have responsibility to put God’s Word into action, what is our role as a community to help each other thrive?

> How do we encourage one another to be good soil—to live out what we’ve heard?

> How do we help those who desire God but are entangled in materialism or struggling to control portions of their lives on their own (e.g., complaining, nagging the spouse, having sex outside of marriage, over-spending, venting anger on the kids)?

> How do we help those who are weary and ready to give up on faith because of overwhelming hurt or temptation? How do we help those living with HIV/AIDS to persevere? What about those stuck in an addiction?

> How do we encourage those who are experiencing spiritual opposition? What is our response to the Evil One’s attempts to snatch their faith away?

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

> If you’re gut honest, what kind of soil are you at the moment? What might be holding you back from being good soil? What ways are you living out your noble and good heart?

> Spend some time this week asking God to help you put His Word into action. He delights in responding to that prayer, and he sends us His Spirit to enable us to live in ways we can’t on our own. That is the mystery and majesty of the Gospel.

## COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Read James 1:19-25. Go back to your “Community Integration” discussion. How can your small group specifically encourage each other to be “doers of God’s Word”?

<sup>1</sup> Let the One Who Has Ears to Hear, R. Steven Notley, member of the Jerusalem School // [www.jerusalemerspective.com/DesktopModules/TotallyFabricated%20-%20JPArticles/print.aspx?articleid=1765](http://www.jerusalemerspective.com/DesktopModules/TotallyFabricated%20-%20JPArticles/print.aspx?articleid=1765)