

LIFE OF A SERVANT**Parables About the Kingdom Mark 4:1–25***“Consider carefully what you hear”* Mark 4:24a**Day 1: Read Mark 4:1–25.**

1. The cluster of parables in this week’s passage begins and ends with a call to “listen!” (vs. 3) and “hear” (vss. 23–24). How does that affect you as you set out to study this passage?
2. In chapter 3, Jesus’ actions divided the crowd between insiders and outsiders to the kingdom. In chapter 4, how do Jesus’ parables divide the crowd?

Day 2: Read Mark 4:1–20.

3. To whom does Jesus tell the parable at first? (vss.1–2)
4. How many people do you think go away understanding the meaning of the parable? (vss.10, 13; Matt.13:10–11)
5. What is different about the people who end up understanding the parable? (vss.10, 13; James 1:5–8)
6. Is there more at stake here than just understanding a little story? What is at stake? (vs.12)
7. Consider the separations going on in the parable, and the separations going on simultaneously in the crowd listening to the parable. How is the incident related in chapter 4 a case of a parable acting itself out?

Day 3: Read Mark 4:1–20.

8. In the parable, what is the seed? (vss.3, 14; Matt.13:18–19)
9. Describe the four kinds of soil (heart) conditions. (vss.14–20)

10. Do you think these soil conditions are hard and fast categories, or have you seen in your life any movement from one condition to another?
11. What is the evidence that the kingdom of God has taken root in a person's life—i.e., what is the "crop"? (vs. 20)
12. Name at least three things Satan uses to render your heart impenetrable, and your hearing of Jesus' words ineffective. (vss.15–19)
13. Eerily, how is one strategy of Satan already working in the very first response of the crowd to the parable?

Day 4: Read Mark 4:21–25

14. The Greek in verse 21 reads "Does the lamp come in order that it might be placed under the bowl or under the bed?" In the Old Testament, the lamp is often a metaphor for God (2 Samuel 22:29). Who is "the lamp"? (John 12:46)
15. Though the kingdom seems to have small and inauspicious beginnings, with many seeking to hide the "lamp," and many wasting the "seed", what is God's sure purpose for the lamp's light (John 1:5, 9) and for the progress and harvest of the sown seed (vs. 20)?
16. In the Greek the verb tense in verse 24 suddenly changes from past to present, with the word "hear" meaning a continual, ongoing hearing, as opposed to a careless or inattentive hearing. What is the evidence of your own "hearing" of God's word? (James 1:22)
17. How does the adage "the poor get poorer and the rich get richer" hold true for the spiritual life? What happens to those who do not "hear" carefully? What happens to those who do?

Day 5: Read Mark 4:1–25.

18. Jesus' parables force us to wrestle personally with the question of who Christ is and how we respond to his authoritative call. Where do you see yourself in this week's parables?