

5-Day Study Guide

Soil & Seed – The Keys to the Kingdom – Thorns That Choke the Word

Chad Everett – Mark 4: 3–20

Why This Study

When Jesus taught in parables, He wasn't just telling stories—He was giving us keys to understand the kingdom of God. In **Mark 4**, Jesus explains that the Word of God is like seed, and our hearts are like soil. The condition of the soil determines whether the Word grows and bears fruit or whether it is choked out and becomes unfruitful.

This study is designed to help you create a **habit of opening your Bible first**. Every question points you to Scripture so that you can see for yourself what God's Word says. The goal isn't just to read these questions and answers—it's to practice the discipline of searching the Word and allowing the Holy Spirit to show you truth.

As you move through each day, don't stop at the printed questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight other questions and applications for your life. Let this guide be a starting point for deeper study and lasting change.

Day 1 – The Seed and the Soil

Daily Focus: God's Word (the seed) is always powerful and full of life, but the condition of our heart (the soil) determines whether it produces fruit.

Big Idea: *The Word of God will always work—the question is, will we allow it to take root in us?*

Key Scripture: Mark 4: 3–9

Quote from Chad:

“Everything you need is in the seed. There's nothing wrong with the Word—but it's the condition of our heart that determines whether that Word will produce something in our life.”

Discussion Questions

- **New Christians:** What does the seed represent in Mark 4: 14? Why is this important to know when you read or hear the Bible?
- **Mature Christians:** How does Mark 4: 20 describe good soil? What fruit should we expect in our lives if we are good soil?
- **Jr. & Sr. High Students:** Read Mark 4: 14–20. Which soil do you feel most like right now and why?
- **Families with Young Children:** What happens when seeds fall on good soil? (Mark 4: 8)
- **Families with Teenagers:** Which soil describes our family's response to God's Word right now? (Mark 4: 14–20)

Application Step: Identify one way to “prepare your soil” this week so the Word has space to grow—remove distractions, set aside time, or practice obedience.

- **Families with Children:** Choose one verse to memorize together this week and talk about it at mealtime.
- **Families with Teens:** Sit down as a family and have each person share one way they can let the Word go deeper. End by praying together.

Day 2 – Wayside & Stony Soil

Daily Focus: Some hearts are hard and distracted (wayside), and others are shallow with no root (stony). Both keep the Word from growing.

Big Idea: *How we hear matters—the Word can only grow if we let it go deep.*

Key Scripture: Mark 4: 14–17

Quote from Chad:

“It’s not enough to just hear the Word with gladness. If we don’t let it take root, then when trouble comes for the Word’s sake, we stumble.”

Discussion Questions

- **New Christians:** What happens to the Word when it's sown on the wayside? (Mark 4: 15)
- **Mature Christians:** According to Mark 4: 17, what reveals whether we have root or not? How can you strengthen your roots?
- **Jr. & Sr. High Students:** What does Jesus say happens when persecution or trouble comes because of the Word? (Mark 4: 17)
- **Families with Young Children:** Why couldn't the seed on the rocky ground grow strong roots? (Mark 4: 16–17)
- **Families with Teenagers:** As a family, what could help us go deeper so we're not surface-level believers?

Application Step: Commit to going deeper in the Word this week. Read Mark 4 daily and ask God to soften your heart.

- **Families with Children:** Share one way each person can keep their heart soft (for example, forgiving quickly).
- **Families with Teens:** Together, make a short list of practices that will help your family go deeper in God's Word, then agree to put one into action this week.

Day 3 – Thorns: Cares of This World

Daily Focus: Anxiety and worry choke the Word by consuming our attention and faith.

Big Idea: *We can't pray a little and worry a lot—we must cast our cares onto Jesus.*

Key Scripture: Mark 4: 18–19; Philippians 4: 6–7; 1 Peter 5: 7

Quote from Chad:

"When the enemy tries to choke the Word, he's coming for your breath—your spirit, your voice. Casting your care is how you fight back."

Discussion Questions

- **New Christians:** According to 1 Peter 5: 7, what should you do with your cares and worries?

- **Mature Christians:** Philippians 4: 6–7 gives a counter-move to anxiety. How can you practice this discipline daily?
- **Jr. & Sr. High Students:** What's the difference between giving God your worries and just ignoring them? (Philippians 4: 6–7)
- **Families with Young Children:** What does Jesus want us to do when we feel worried? (1 Peter 5: 7)
- **Families with Teenagers:** How can we, as a family, trade worry for prayer this week?

Application Step: Each time worry comes this week, stop and pray immediately, turning it into thanksgiving.

- **Families with Children:** Keep a “worry box.” Whenever someone feels worried, write it down and pray as a family before placing it in the box.
- **Families with Teens:** As a family, set aside one evening to share your top worries and pray for each other, choosing to trust God together.

Day 4 – Thorns: The Deceitfulness of Riches

Daily Focus: Riches themselves aren't evil, but trusting in them instead of God deceives and chokes the Word.

Big Idea: *Generosity breaks the grip of riches and keeps our heart centered on God.*

Key Scripture: Mark 4: 18–19; 1 Timothy 6: 17–19; Proverbs 3: 9–10

Quote from Chad:

“The tithe isn't about money—it's about checking my heart. Generosity breaks the deceitfulness of riches.”

Discussion Questions

- **New Christians:** What does 1 Timothy 6: 17 say we should not put our trust in?
- **Mature Christians:** How does Proverbs 3: 9–10 describe the connection between honoring God and His provision?

- **Jr. & Sr. High Students:** What does Jesus show us in Luke 18 about the rich young ruler? Why did he walk away?
- **Families with Young Children:** Who should we honor first with what we have? (Proverbs 3: 9)
- **Families with Teenagers:** As a family, how can we practice generosity together?

Application Step: Be generous this week in a specific way—whether with money, time, or encouragement—and honor God with your first fruits.

- **Families with Children:** Decide together on one way your family can bless someone this week (bake, write a card, or share toys).
- **Families with Teens:** As a family, choose one generous act you can do together (e.g., give to someone in need, serve a neighbor, or make a donation).

Day 5 – Thorns: Desires for Other Things & The Good Soil

Daily Focus: Chasing “many things” will choke the Word, but seeking the “one thing” keeps our hearts fruitful.

Big Idea: *Godliness with contentment is great gain—when we desire Jesus first, everything else falls into place.*

Key Scripture: Mark 4: 18–20; 1 Timothy 6: 6–7; Luke 10: 38–42; Matthew 6: 33

Quote from Chad:

“Martha was worried about many things, but Mary chose the one thing—to sit at the feet of Jesus. The counter-move to many desires is to seek the One Thing.”

Discussion Questions

- **New Christians:** What does Matthew 6: 33 say we should seek first?
- **Mature Christians:** In Luke 10: 38–42, how does Jesus contrast Martha’s actions with Mary’s choice? What does this mean for your walk with Him?
- **Jr. & Sr. High Students:** According to 1 Timothy 6: 6–7, what should we remember about the things we own?

- **Families with Young Children:** What did Mary do that made Jesus happy? (Luke 10: 39)
- **Families with Teenagers:** What could we do together this week to put God first as a family?

Application Step: Simplify and refocus your life this week by choosing one way to put God first above other things.

- **Families with Children:** Pick one night this week to read a Bible story, sing a worship song, and pray together.
- **Families with Teens:** Together, choose one activity (social media, TV, gaming, etc.) to set aside for one evening and use that time for prayer, worship, or Bible reading as a family.

Bonus Reflection – Clearing the Thorns, Choosing the Good Soil

Daily Focus: The enemy isn't afraid of you having a Bible on the shelf—he's after the Word of God taking root and bearing fruit in your life.

Big Idea: *The Word becomes unfruitful when it is choked, but it multiplies when the soil is good.*

Key Scripture:

“Now these are the ones sown among thorns... the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

— **Mark 4: 18–20 (NKJV)**

Quote from Chad:

“The enemy is after the Word of God in your life. Not your emotions, not your positive vibes—the Word. If he can choke out the Word, he can choke out your breath and your fruit.”

Reflection Questions

- Which thorn do you battle most often: **worry, riches, or desire for other things?** (Mark 4: 19)
- In what ways have you seen these thorns **choke the Word** in your life before it could produce fruit?
- What practices help you to keep your heart as **good soil?** (Mark 4: 20)
- How can your family or group encourage each other to **clear the thorns together** so the Word can multiply?

Application Challenge

- **Personal:** Journal where you see each thorn (worry, riches, desires) creeping into your life. Pray and write down the counter-move Scripture that will uproot it.
- **Families with Children:** Draw a picture of soil with thorns and soil with good plants. Talk about how Jesus wants our hearts to be like the good soil where His Word can grow.
- **Families with Teens:** As a family, choose one of the three thorns and commit to facing it together this week. Replace it with the counter-move Chad taught—casting cares, generosity, or seeking the One Thing.