



SERMON: 40 Days of Discipleship – “*The Secret to Spiritual Growth*”

Watch [this week's sermon](#)

Read [Matthew 13:1-9](#) – “Parable of the Farmer Scattering Seed”

- Jesus starts with an ordinary image, a farmer scattering seed, to teach a deeply spiritual truth. Why do you think Jesus chooses such a simple picture to begin this important section of teaching? What does that suggest about the way God speaks to people? How might this challenge the idea that spiritual truth is only found in dramatic or obviously religious moments?
- In the parable, the same seed is scattered widely, but it lands in very different places. What stands out to you about the farmer's willingness to scatter seed so generously? What might this say about God's desire to reach people? How does the sermon challenge you to think less about the seed and more about the condition of the soil?
- The different kinds of ground suggest that people can hear the same word and respond very differently. What are some reasons people might hear Jesus' words and still not let them take root? How do distraction, pride, pain, or spiritual shallowness affect the way we receive God's truth? Which of these feels most relevant in your life right now?
- Jesus ends with a call to listen, implying that hearing is more than just letting sound enter your ears. What is the difference between hearing Jesus' words and truly listening to them? How does the sermon push beyond understanding ideas to actually receiving them in the heart? What would it look like this week to listen in a way that makes room for real change?

Read [Proverbs 3:1-6](#) – “Trusting in the Lord”

- This passage begins by calling God's people to remember and hold on to his teaching. Why do you think remembering God's instruction is so important when life feels confusing or stressful? What kinds of voices most often compete with God's wisdom in your life? How does the sermon's image of Jesus as the voice in your ear deepen your understanding of this passage?
- Proverbs calls us to trust in the Lord with all our hearts instead of leaning on our own understanding. What does it look like to lean on your own understanding in daily life? Why is that often our default response when we feel uncertain or afraid? Where do you most struggle to trust God instead of trying to figure everything out on your own?
- The passage says that in all your ways you should submit to God, and he will make your paths straight. What do you think it means to acknowledge God in all your ways rather than only in obviously “spiritual” parts of life? How does this connect with the sermon's theme of letting Jesus be more than Savior and also Lord? What area of your life most needs to come under God's direction right now?
- This proverb presents God not only as wise, but as the one who actually leads people through the maze of life. How does this passage challenge the assumption that you have to find your own way first and

then ask God to bless it? What might change if you believed God really could direct your steps better than you can? What is one specific decision, relationship, or burden where you need to stop leaning on yourself and start trusting God's leading?

Read [Micah 2:12-13](#) – “Hope for Restoration”

- Micah describes God as the one who gathers his people and brings them together again. What does this passage suggest about God's heart for people who feel scattered, stuck, or cut off? How does that connect with the sermon's image of feeling lost in the maze of life? Where do you most need to remember that God is still gathering and holding you?
- The passage says that one goes ahead of them and breaks open the way. Why is that image so powerful for people who feel trapped or unable to move forward? How does this deepen the sermon's emphasis that breakthrough comes from God, not just from trying harder? What “closed gate” or stuck place in your life most needs God's breakthrough right now?
- Micah presents God not just as a comforter, but as a leader who goes before his people. How is that different from thinking of God as someone who simply watches from a distance? How does this connect with the sermon's repeated call to listen to the one who knows the way through? What does it look like to follow when you do not yet see the full path ahead?
- This passage points to freedom that comes from trusting the one who leads, rather than staying where fear or confusion has kept you. Where might you be tempted to stay stuck because it feels more familiar than moving forward with God? What would it mean to let Jesus lead you out rather than waiting until you feel fully ready? What is one concrete place in your life where you sense God saying, “Come on, I will lead you through”?

Read [Isaiah 6:9-10](#) – “Isaiah's Cleansing and Call”

- Isaiah describes people who hear but do not understand and see but do not perceive. What do you think it means to hear God's word without really receiving it? How does this connect with the sermon's warning that it is possible to listen outwardly while remaining closed inwardly? Where do you see that danger in your own life?
- The passage speaks about hearts becoming hardened and eyes and ears being closed. What kinds of things tend to harden a person spiritually over time? How can pain, pride, distraction, or cynicism make it harder to receive what God is saying? Which of those feels most important for you to pay attention to right now?
- Isaiah's words show that spiritual resistance is deeper than just confusion or lack of information. Why is it possible for someone to know a lot about God and still resist him? How does this connect with the sermon's emphasis that breakthrough happens not just by understanding ideas but by letting God change the soil of the heart? What would it look like for you to move from information to surrender?
- The warning in this passage makes Jesus' repeated call to “listen” even more urgent. What practices help you listen to God in a way that keeps your heart soft and responsive? How can you tell when your heart is becoming more open versus more guarded? What is one specific way you can invite God to soften your heart this week?

APPLICATION: Pick one to put into practice this week.

1. **Listen on Purpose:** Set aside five quiet minutes on different days this week to read Matthew 13:1-9 slowly. Before you read, pray, “Jesus, help me listen.” After you read, write down one word or phrase that stands out and carry it with you through the day.
2. **Ask God to Change the Soil:** Choose one condition from the sermon that feels most true of your heart right now—hardened, shallow, distracted, or something else. Bring that honestly to God in prayer and ask him to change the soil of your heart so his word can take root. Then take one concrete step that makes room for that change, such as limiting a distraction, confessing something, or returning to a neglected spiritual habit.
3. **Follow the Voice That Leads You Through:** Identify one area of life where you feel stuck, lost, or unsure of the next step. Instead of trying to solve the whole maze, ask God each day this week, “What is the next faithful step?” Then act on one clear prompting from Scripture, prayer, or wise counsel, trusting that Jesus leads you through one step at a time.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS & QUESTIONS

View this week's [Daily Bible Readings](#)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9	10	11	12	13
Matthew 14:1-21	Matthew 14:22-36	Matthew 15:1-39	Matthew 16:1-20	Matthew 16:21-28

Monday, March 9: Matthew 14:1-21

1. Herod throws a birthday banquet that ends in John's death, driven by pride and the fear of losing face, while Jesus withdraws in grief and then responds to the crowds with compassion and a meal that gives life. When you hold those two side by side, what do they reveal about two very different ways of using power and dealing with guilt or pain, and where do you see traces of either pattern in your own life or in our culture?
2. When the disciples tell Jesus to send the crowds away, he answers, "You give them something to eat," and then starts with their small, inadequate five loaves and two fish. How does that moment reshape the way you think about your own limited time, gifts, or resources, and what might it look like for you or for our group to offer what we have to Jesus for the sake of others this week?

Tuesday, March 10: Matthew 14:22-36

- In this scene Jesus sends the disciples ahead, stays behind to pray, and then comes to them in the darkest part of the night when the wind is against them, so that his approach actually scares them at first. How does that picture of Jesus arriving in a way that is both unsettling and saving speak into times when you feel you are obeying yet struggling, and where might you be mistaking his approach for something to fear rather than someone to welcome?
- After Peter sinks and is rescued, the wind dies down, and the disciples shift from panic to worship, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God," while people in Gennesaret simply touch the edge of his cloak and are healed. When you hold together Peter's faltering faith, Jesus' steady grip, and the crowds' simple reaching out, what do you notice about different ways of coming to Jesus, and what might it look like for you to reach for him or worship him in a situation that currently feels beyond you?

Wednesday, March 11: Matthew 15:1-39

- In this chapter Jesus confronts religious leaders for honoring God with their lips while their hearts are far from him, then later praises a Canaanite woman's persistent faith and heals large crowds before feeding them. When you hold those scenes together, how do they challenge the way you think about who is truly close to God, and where do you see either empty religiosity or surprising faith in and around your own life?
- Twice in this chapter Jesus is in the presence of great need, first as people bring the sick to be laid at his feet and then as a hungry crowd has nothing to eat in a remote place, and he says, "I have compassion for these people." As you picture that steady compassion, how does it speak into the way

you usually respond to the needs and interruptions around you, and what is one concrete way you or our group could reflect Jesus' compassion this week?

Thursday, March 12: Matthew 16:1-20

- The Pharisees and Sadducees can read the sky to predict the weather, yet miss the “signs of the times” right in front of them and still ask Jesus for another sign. How does that picture of people who are skilled at reading everyday signals but slow to recognize God’s work challenge you, and where might you be asking God for more proof while ignoring what he has already shown you?
- In Caesarea Philippi, surrounded by other powers and idols, Jesus asks, “Who do you say I am?” and Peter answers, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God,” a confession Jesus says the church will be built on. When you hear that question today, how would you answer it not just with your words but with your life, and what difference does your real answer make for how you see the church and your place in it?

Friday, March 13: Matthew 16:21-28

- Right after Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah, he rebukes Jesus for talking about suffering and death, and Jesus responds, “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” When you think about your own hopes for what following Jesus will bring, where do you notice a clash between God’s concerns and your natural human expectations, and how might that be shaping your response to hardship right now?
- Jesus says that anyone who wants to be his disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him, and that whoever wants to save their life will lose it while whoever loses their life for him will find it. When you hold those paradoxical words in front of your own schedule, priorities, and dreams, what is one specific area where you sense him inviting you to “lose” something for his sake, and what kind of deeper life do you hope might be found on the other side of that surrender?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Daily devotions](#)
- Podcasts:
 - [Pastor Mike Drop!](#)
 - [“Gospel” – Word with Webb podcast](#)
- Videos:
 - [BibleProject: Matthew 14-28](#) (7:10)
 - [BibleProject: Gospel of the Kingdom](#) (4:50)
 - [BibleProject: The Gospel](#) (5:38)
- Articles:
 - [“What are the Gospels?” by Tim Mackie \(BibleProject\)](#)