

- 1) We are in the midst of a series of four parables.
- 2) The actual situation here is somewhat unclear.
- 3) There is question in my mind whether all these are spoken only to his disciples or if at some point Mark begins relating parables given to the crowds and the disciples.
- 4) Regardless of the audience, these parables can definitely be directed toward the disciples as they are being prepared for the mission ahead – not only immediately but also when Jesus is no longer with them.

**Mark 4:24-25 (NIV)**

- 5) At this point, Jesus tells the disciples and anyone else listening to him to “Pay attention to what you hear” (NRSV).
- 6) The New Living Translation I think delivers this in a very clear manner:

**Mark 4:24-25 (NLT)**

24 Then he added, "Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given—and you will receive even more. 25 To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them." NLT

- 7) We know that Jesus taught in parables.
- 8) That being a given, we must know that the parables are important for what they teach.
- 9) Jesus wants his disciples and all of us to pay attention to his words.
- 10) We are to understand, and then share with others.
- 11) As we do, even more understanding will be given to pass along.
- 12) The LABC makes the following comment in this regard:

Believers are responsible to use well their God-given understanding, insight, and opportunities to share the gospel. Whether they have little or much, that is not nearly as important as what is done with what they have. It is the measure with which they give that determines what more will be given. Even then, still more will be given because a person's openness and perception of the kingdom message will bring great rewards. Ultimately, believers will receive eternal blessings in heaven.

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- 13) The point can further be made that, as with the disciples any who teach or preach, can expect to be rewarded for their diligent efforts.
- 14) In context, this refers to all of us for we are all to be sharing the gospel with others – teaching if you will.

## ***Gospel of Mark – NOTES***

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- 15) The more we study (hear and understand) the better able we are to share and the more that will be given to us in the way of understanding.
- 16) I think the takeaway for us is the only way we can be part of what Jesus is saying to the disciples today is to **read, study, and meditate on what he says in scripture.**
- 17) In this way, we can apply and share what he is saying:  
“Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given—and you will receive even more.”
- 18) To be sure, the way we hear Jesus’ words today is thru studying and paying attention to his teachings.
- 19) And, in this way, we can be ready when the opportunity arises to share what we understand – in other words to be the farmer planting good seed in good soil.

- 1) Now, with regard to how we understand as we hear;
- 2) Let’s do a little experiment – this is not a test – it is simply an illustration of a couple of points and also help us clear up exactly who the audience might be at this point.
- 3) Listen carefully to this next parable as I read it. Perhaps even read along carefully as well.
- 4) **Here’s the important part**, try to imagine yourselves as a member of Jesus’ audience – not a disciple or even one who had heard him speak before but as a ***person hearing Jesus for the first time.***
- 5) ***I’ll give a couple of seconds at the end*** for it to sink in and then, let’s discuss the parable and try to come to a conclusion as to what it means exactly – FROM the non-disciple non-believer perspective.
  - a) They are looking for healing.
  - b) Jewish – knows about God and the Kingdom.
  - c) Curious about His teaching.

### **Mark 4:26-29 (NIV)**

#### ***PAUSE - Ok – FROM the non-disciple perspective what does the parable mean?***

- As an individual listening to Jesus’ sermon, the crux might be that God is powerful and in charge and even though we do not understand the how’s of what he does, we reap the benefits.
  - Probably add to that, we should be grateful!
- 6) Now, read the parable again.
  - 7) **This time**, try to imagine yourselves as part of Jesus’ disciples and other followers:
    - a) Obviously have heard Jesus’ teachings.
    - b) As a disciple, you are getting ready to go out and preach the good news to others.
    - c) Have doubts about many things.

## ***Gospel of Mark – NOTES***

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8) As before, *I'll give a couple of seconds at the end* for it to sink in and then, let's discuss the parable and try to come to a conclusion as to what it means exactly from that perspective.

### ***Ok – what does the parable mean from a disciples perspective?***

9) As one who is going to be an apostle, and envoy, or messenger planting the seed, we might:

- a) have concerns about our effectiveness
- b) even think we were the ones that were making the final difference – NOT!!

10) The conclusion is the same - God is powerful and in charge and even though we do not understand the how's of what he does, we reap the benefits.

11) However, the impact is different from the disciples perspective.

- a) In their case, it requires a trust that God will provide the increase.

12) They need to be like the farmer who goes to sleep and even though he does not understand the how's he can trust God to supply the increase.

13) And, like the farmer, he must do his part but that is all he can do!

14) There are a couple of points I hope we get here.

15) First – context – if you do not have a context in which you are reading it becomes very difficult to understand what Jesus is saying in these parables.

#### ***a) You are listening without ears to hear.***

b) As we have discussed before, there are many facets to context

i) Scripturally we have (as we read and meditate):

- (1) surrounding verses – few to many
- (2) the situation of the writer
- (3) the situation of the hearer
- (4) the entire biblical narrative
- (5) etc.

16) The Second Point is also context (from the hearer's perspective)!

a) As we just saw, personal perspective as a context can have a definite effect on how we view a given "hearing of the word".

- (1) What are we dealing with in our lives
- (2) What is the situation as we hear (study) the word

17) In any contextual situation, we could see the potential for a problem – definitely more so when considering personal context.

### ***What kind of problems can you see us getting in when we start considering personal context?***

- Totally ignoring any possible differences in readings from one time to the next.

Heb 4:12 (NIV)

## ***Gospel of Mark – NOTES***

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12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

- To me, this means simply that God’s word plays out in our lives.
- It has meaning that is relevant to our current situations.
- It is not a just text book to be memorized and used as a step by step method (checklist) by which to live.
- It is obviously to be obeyed but not every historical fact or situation in scripture needs to be turned into a rule – sometimes they are “just situations”.
  - I sometimes think this is one of the main problems that our early founders had (Campbell and Stone and many others who followed thru the years).
  - In attempting to restore the “Ancient Faith” returning to the way the apostles indicated things were at the time they wrote the divinely inspired words they missed what the Hebrew writer said – they wanted to take every situation and every inference and turn it into a guide on how we worship.
  - i.e. scripture was not be living and active – it a textbook to be followed at all costs.
  - This was especially true of early Campbell.
  - Stone had more of a lifestyle idea than Campbell (at least at first) and saw a need more to help people and live a right life.
  - AGAIN – this is MY OPINION – many may not agree.

Getting back to the problems we may encounter and me off my soapbox.

- Letting selfishness because of our situation dictate what we think a scripture means.
- This one is subtitle – Doubting the conclusion we draw if it makes us uncomfortable.
  - This might lead to ignoring what God is trying to tell us.

18) As a disciple in this context, even though the basic meaning is the same the impact on the hearer is different.

- a) Theirs was a desire to assure they were being effective, so the parable spoke to them in a confidence building, don’t worry about it sense.
  - i) Same words but very different meaning!
  - ii) Both valid assessments and understandings
  - iii) Both true.