

6. What insights into kingdom growth do the parables of the mustard seed and the growing seed give us in 4:26-34?

7. Are you a “subject” in the kingdom of God? Explain.

8. Do you have responsibilities as a part of the kingdom?

## Chapter Four WHO IS THIS GUY?



### WHERE IS JESUS?

1. On the shore by the Sea of Galilee
2. In a boat on Sea of Galilee

**OVERVIEW:** Chapter four develops a new element in Mark's portrayal of Jesus that he introduced in 3:23: the parable. A parable can be defined many ways. Some call it an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Others describe a parable as a story or

figure placed alongside a teaching to help us understand its meaning.

The English word *parable* comes from the Greek word **parabalo**, which means “to throw or toss alongside.” Warren Wiersbe explains its meaning this way:

*It is much more than “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning,” and it certainly is not an “illustration” such as a preacher would use in a sermon. A true parable gets the listener deeply involved and compels that listener to make a personal decision about God’s truth and his or her life. So penetrating and personal are parables that, after they heard several of them, the religious leaders wanted to kill the Lord Jesus!*

A parable begins simply enough as a picture that grabs our attention. It quickly turns into a mirror that causes us to look deep into our souls to wrestle with its deep spiritual truth. Why did Jesus teach in parables anyway? In 4:10, the disciples asked Him that very question. His answer was that parables both hide and reveal the same spiritual truth—depending on the openness of the heart of the listener. As Wiersbe points out, *“The crowd did not judge the parables; the parables judged the crowd. The careless listener, who thought he knew everything, would hear only a story that he did not really understand; and the result in his life would be judgment.”* Mark records only four parables of Jesus, but they are dynamic and poignant.

#### **FOR YOUR GROUP STUDY:**

1. What observations have you made in your study of Mark this week?
2. What does it mean to “hear” the Word of God?
3. How do you “hear” Jesus when He doesn’t stand before you in person to speak?
4. How would you describe what the kingdom of God is?
5. Why does Jesus use these different parables to explain the kingdom?

10. In 4:18, Jesus describes three kinds of weeds or thorns that choke out the word. How have you struggled to keep the “weeds” of your life from choking out God’s message in your heart?

11. In 4:21-25, Jesus declares that He is the light that cannot be hidden. Many Christians today are hidden from sight, not willing or eager to be identified as Christians. Such a Christian is like a lamp that is lit but then hidden away. If a lamp doesn’t help people see, it isn’t worth much. Does your life show other people how to find God and how to live for him? If not, ask what “baskets” have hidden your light: complacency, resentment, embarrassment, stubbornness of heart, or disobedience could keep you from shining.

**Read Mark 4:9.**

? “*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*”  
A good paraphrase of this sentence would be, “Figure this one out for yourself, if you can.”

**Read Mark 4:10.**

? “*Secrets*” The Greek word is ***musterion***, which means that something formerly hidden is now being revealed.

**Read Mark 4:14.**

? “*word*” The Greek word is ***logos***, which might be better translated “message.”

**Read Mark 4:21-23.**

? “*lamp*” In ancient Israel, a lamp was a lighted wick in a clay bowl that was full of oil. It would have been lit and placed on a high stand in the center of the room to give light to the whole house.

**FOR YOUR PERSONAL STUDY:**

1. There are two questions to be asked of ourselves when we read a parable of Jesus. Answer the following questions about each parable in Chapter 4:
  - a. How does this story relate to me?

- b. What do I need to do about it?

2. In Mark 4:3, Jesus says to the crowd, "Listen!" He is clearly set on focusing their attention on the parable He is about to tell them. How does Jesus get your attention when He has something He wants to say to you?

3. What are barriers in your life that make it difficult for you to hear what the Lord wants for you in your life?

4. Twice Jesus ends a parable with the phrase "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." What more did Jesus want the listeners in the crowd to understand about these parables?

5. If you were sitting in the crowd and heard Jesus teach the parables of chapter 4, what would your reaction have been to what Jesus said?

6. Why did Jesus say He spoke to the crowd in parables? (4:10-12) How do you react to this explanation?

7. What kind of soil are you at this point in your life?

8. Are certain seasons of your life explained by different kinds of soil as explained in this parable?

9. What do we learn about spreading the good news about Jesus from the soil of the parable?