

PROVERBS | DIRECTIONS FOR LIFE: WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS
PROVERBS 9:1-6, 13-18; 7:6-27; HOSEA; LUKE 8:4-8, 11-15
2ND STREET COMMUNITY CHURCH
SUNDAY, 14 MARCH 2010
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It's good to be together again this morning. We're going to look at verses from two *Old Testament* books, and one *New Testament* book ... as we study about the differences between wisdom and foolishness.

1. **HOSEA** **HOSEA AND GOMER: A HUSBAND-WIFE ALLEGORY OF GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.**
2. **PROVERBS 7 & 9** **WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS: THE CHOICE IS ALWAYS OURS.**
3. **LUKE 8:4-8, 11-15** **THE SEEDS AND THE SOIL: A PARABLE ABOUT GOD'S WORD AND OUR HEARTS.**

Last Sunday I asked you to read *The Old Testament* book of **HOSEA** this week as an introduction to this morning's teaching. I hope you were able to do this. **HOSEA** is an allegory - and an allegory is a true or a made-up story in which the characters represent or illustrate something else - often a **VIRTUE** or an **IDEAL**.

The book of **HOSEA** tells a curious, real-life story about a husband named Hosea, and his morally sloppy wife with the odd name of Gomer. When this story was first told, it was an allegory illustrating **God's relentless love** for the Jews. And looking at it today, through the eyes of 21st Century westerners, it's an allegory illustrating **God's relentless love** for everyone He has created, which, of course, includes me and you.

1. **HOSEA** **HOSEA AND GOMER: A HUSBAND-WIFE ALLEGORY OF GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.**

What do you really know and believe about **God's unconditional love** for you? Do you believe it's a reality for other people, but not for you? At least, not for most of the time? And how **relentless** has **God's love** been for the Jews over the course of the past fifty-plus centuries? And just how **relentless** is **God's love** for you and me on Sunday, the 14th of March 2010 in Newberg, Oregon? I'm glad you asked! And you can take it from me that **God's love** for me and for you is beyond description, it's without end, its worth is incalculable, and its depth is immeasurable.

"But how do I know that this **unconditional love of God** that you're telling me about is real? I mean, what does it look like?" Let me tell you exactly what it looks like ...

ILLUSTRATION ... One morning, a medieval monk named Brendan told his brothers that he'd share a teaching on the "**Love of God**" at evening Mass. The day passed, work was accomplished, dinner was finished, the monks assembled in the Abbey, Mass began, songs were sung, Scripture was read, and prayers were prayed.

And as the time came closer for Brendan to share the message from God's Word that he had on his heart, the shadows fell and the light ceased to come in through the cathedral windows where the flock had gathered. And in the near darkness of the Abbey, Brendan blew out all the candles but one and carried it to the foot of the life-sized crucifix that hung just to the altar's right side.

Taking out a ladder from behind the altar, Brendan solemnly arranged it in front of the Crucifix and climbed to the top. Holding his single candle near the bloody crown of thorns that had been pushed down onto Jesus' head, Brendan rested his own head against Christ's chest. He rested. He waited. He pressed into God's unconditional love.

Going down a couple rungs on the ladder, Brendan reached the candle out to his right and then to his left, illumining Jesus' two wounded hands. You could have heard a pin drop. Sometimes a sermon needs to be "*seen more than heard.*" Putting his hands onto Jesus' hands one at a time, Brendan had never felt closer to Him and His love-made-visible expression of love for him, and for the world.

Climbing down a couple more rungs, Brendan drew the flicker of the light given out by the candle up to Jesus' side, and the wound left there by the soldier's spear. Again, he rested. He waited. And at long last, Brendan was again on the floor, and he reached up with his single, flickering candle, and illumined Jesus' feet, nailed to the cross. The silence deepened.

Finally, in the silent hush that had fallen onto the assembly, Brendan blew out the candle and walked out of the Abbey in the darkness, without saying a single word. For really, what was there to say?

What does the **unconditional love of God** look like? The monks who had gathered with Brendan for worship all those centuries ago saw it. And you and I see it too in the broken, crucified body of Jesus Christ - **the Lamb of God whose death took away the sin of the world** (***JOHN 1:29***). But we also clearly see it in the book of ***HOSEA*** ... as Hosea represents God, and Gomer, Hosea's wife, represents the Jews, and you and me. And just like Hosea loved Gomer with all that he had, so too, God's love for the Jews, and for us is unconditional, unfathomable, and unstoppable. It is complete.

Like us, Gomer wasn't all that easy of a person to love. Like us, Gomer kept running away from love, instead of toward it. And yet, also just like you and I are so prone to do with God's love, Gomer took Hosea's love for her for granted, not only ignoring him and having affairs with other men, but in the end, even prostituting herself at a brothel.

And gang, just like Hosea kept trying to win Gomer back into a first love relationship with him, so too, God is forever committed to going out into the night, to chasing us down, to finding us and holding us tight, and to looking into our eyes and wooing us back into a first-love relationship with Him. Do you see it? Do you believe it? Listen to an excerpt about Gomer by my favorite author Frederick Buechner, from his book *Peculiar Treasures* ... listen for bits of your own story and **God's relentless love.**

GOMER | Frederick Buechner, *Peculiar Treasures*

She was always good company - a little heavy with the lipstick maybe, a little less than choosy about men and booze, a little loud, but great at a party and always good for a laugh. Then the prophet Hosea came along wearing a sandwich board that read “*THE END IS AT HAND*” on one side and “*WATCH OUT*” on the other.

The first time he asked her to marry him, she thought he was *kidding*. The second time she knew he was serious but thought he was *crazy*. The third time she said “yes.” Any fool could see he loved her. She even loved him back for a while ... but everybody could see the marriage wasn’t going to last, and it didn’t.

While Hosea was off hitting the sawdust trail, Gomer took to hitting as many nightspots as she could squeeze into a night, and any resemblance between her next batch of children and Hosea was purely coincidental. It almost killed him, of course.

He tried locking her out of the house a few times when she wasn’t in by five in the morning, but he always opened the door when she finally showed up and even helped get her into their bed if she couldn’t see straight enough to get there herself. And then one day she didn’t show up at all.

Hosea swore that this time he was through with her for keeps, but of course he wasn’t. When he finally found her, she was lying passed out in a highly specialized establishment ... and he had to pay the management plenty to let her out of her contract. She’d lost her front teeth and picked up some scars you had to see to believe, but Hosea had her back again and that seemed to be all that mattered.

It wasn’t long after that that Hosea changed his sandwich board to read “*GOD IS LOVE*” on one side and “*THERE’S NO END TO IT*” on the other, and when he stood on the street corner belting out ...

HOSEA 11:8-9 (emphasis added)

How can I give you up, O Ephraim!

[You are my precious child!]

How can I hand you over, O Israel!

[I can never let go of you!]

For I am God and not man,

[the Holy One Who knows you and is in your midst]

Nobody can say how many converts Hosea made in his lifetime, but one thing that’s for sure is that, including Gomer’s, there was seldom a dry eye in the house. (*HOSEA 1-3, 11*)

Gang, once you and I get a glimpse of God’s unconditional love for us, it only changes everything about us, everything about other people, everything about *suffering*, everything about *success*, and everything about what shapes our *priorities*

and our *mission* in life, and it certainly changes everything about God and our relationship with Him. And I see our **FIRST FAITH LESSON** this morning ...

FAITH LESSON ...

God wants to give us His love, but it has to be *accepted* before it can be *experienced*. God proves His love for us by never giving up on us ... but let's not exasperate His love for us. Let's receive it, surrender to it, and remain in it - not allowing the **SINFULNESS OF PRIDE AND SELF** to impatiently turn us away from God's unconditional love.

And so with the realities of Hosea and Gomer's love story, and with the realities of the love story that's happening between God and you, and between God and me, turn with me to **PROVERBS 7 & 9** ... and let's take a drink of the truth that Solomon has for us here about **wisdom and foolishness**.

**2. PROVERBS 7 & 9 WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS:
THE CHOICE IS ALWAYS OURS.**

Throughout the book of **PROVERBS** Solomon offers us instruction about the differences between **wisdom** and **foolishness**, and he keeps reminding us that the choice to pursue one or the other is always ours. And Solomon also reminds us throughout **PROVERBS** that as we make these choices, we'll also experience fruit ... that from our **wise choices** we'll experience **FRUIT OF BLESSING AND GAIN** and that from our **foolish choices** we'll experience **FRUIT OF DESTRUCTION AND LOSS**. And we know what Solomon's talking about don't we? Oh, that we'd know more and more of the fruit of **wise choice** ... the **FRUIT OF BLESSING AND GAIN!** As we look at a few verses from **PROVERBS 7 & 9**, let's keep a keen eye out for what God is saying to us about the **wise choices** we're making, and the **foolish choices** we're making.

Like the verses we looked at last Sunday, Solomon uses women to illustrate the foolish, sinful choices we make. And also like in last week's teaching, Solomon talks once again about sexual sin, making the woman look a bit more like the evil, sinister one, and the man, while also sinful, a bit more of a victim of sin rather than the instigator of sin.

But just so you don't think that sin has a gender-bias, let me assure you that Solomon could have just as easily switched the roles here. And like my mom used to tell me when talking about how easy it is to assign motives and pigeonhole people and their actions, "People are never the enemy, they're victims of the enemy." So turn with me to **PROVERBS 9:13-18** ...

PROVERBS 9:13-18 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

¹³ The woman of folly is boisterous; *she is* naïve and knows nothing.

¹⁴ She sits at the doorway of her house, on a seat by the high places of the city,

¹⁵ Calling to those who pass by, who are making their paths straight:

¹⁶ “Whoever is naïve, let him turn in here,” and to him who lacks understanding she says,
¹⁷ “Stolen water is sweet; and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.”
¹⁸ But he does not know that the dead are there, *that* her guests are in the depths of Sheol [Hell].

Solomon gives us a pretty graphic illustration here of the **SEDUCTIVENESS** and **ATTRACTIVENESS** of sexual sin, and frankly of all forms of sin, sexual or not. And he paints this picture not only to warn his sons and all of us in the future who would read his words, about the destruction that always accompanies any involvement we have in sin, but to give us, men, women, old people, middle-aged people, and young people, a description of the temptations of the world that try to lure the naïve, the simple-minded, and the gullible into Satan’s traps. Do you see it?

v. 16 ... “Whoever is naïve, let him turn in here,” and to him who lacks understanding she says ... In the Garden of Eden, Satan tempted Eve with what he clearly didn’t have. He tempted her with **knowledge**.

PROVERBS 1:7 says, “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” Satan doesn’t fear the LORD. He doesn’t hold God in high esteem. Therefore, he doesn’t have any **knowledge**. And gang, Satan still tempts you and me into sin and destruction by offering us things that he himself doesn’t have. And by using the word naïve here, Solomon refers to anyone who chooses **foolishness** over **wisdom**.

Like a spider lures flies into its web, sin cries out to all unsuspecting people to come close and sample what it’s offering ... nearly always sending the message that it will be fun and exciting to be secretive and mysterious. But in **v. 18** we see that sin can’t ever deliver what it promises.

v. 18 ... But he does not know that the dead are there, *that* her guests are in the depths of Sheol [Hell]. ... The **MOTIVES** of sin are always **SELF-SEEKING**, and the **WORDS** of sin are always **EVIL**. And when you and I are foolish enough to give into sin’s siren song, we’re the one who always ends up **EMPTY**, **ALONE**, and **DESTROYED**.

Let me focus in on husbands and wives for a minute. A week ago, 2nd Streeter Chuck Mylander recommended a book to me and I’m reading it now. It’s called **LOVE And RESPECT: The LOVE She Most Desires, The RESPECT He Desperately Needs**, by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. Eggerichs believes that a wife has one driving need - **TO FEEL LOVED**. And when this need is met, she is generally happy. And Eggerichs believes that a husband also has one driving need - **TO FEEL RESPECTED**. And that when this need is met, he is generally happy. Now no book is perfect, but Eggerichs’ message is hitting home to lots of men and women, and it’s making sense to me. I’d highly recommend it - and you can pick it up at *Chapters*.

Then on this past Friday morning, just two days ago now, I received an email from a woman in our flock, in which she shared some thoughts with me that last week’s teaching brought up for her, and how they’ve lingered in her heart throughout this past week - connecting with her own story and with her heart for others in our flock who are struggling with this area of life. I asked her if I could share part of what she

wrote me and she graciously said “yes.” Listen to how her words tie into what I’m hearing in Eggerichs’ book *LOVE And RESPECT*. She writes ...

Yes some women seduce men for power and control ... but women also desire to feel *treasured* by “their man”. When I left my first marriage, I felt invisible, taken for granted, unsupported, and definitely not *treasured*.

My heart silently screamed, “Am I invisible? Do you even see me? Aren’t all the things I do all day, the cooking, the cleaning, and the growing our child, worth noticing?” I was starved for attention and the more I asked for it, the farther my husband ran away into his job, and into his “social” and even church commitments.

I wonder how often this same desperation plays out in the hearts of women in the church setting. How many *emotional attractions and affairs* could have been avoided, which led to *physical affairs* and to the break up and hurt for many families, if husbands had truly *treasured* their wives?

Women are wired to *react*. Give us blessings and attention and we will *react* much differently than when we’re overlooked and ignored. Fortunately I’m married now to the man God provided. When I feel invisible and I cry out, he hears me and responds. But how many Christian husbands aren’t responding that way to their wives?

Wow! Her words really nail the truth that the human beings who should know us the best can overlook what we’re longing for. And this can be true for single people as well as for married folks.

We all need to believe that **WE MATTER**, are **TREASURED**, and are **NOT INVISIBLE** - not so that our egos will get all inflated - but so that our self-esteem will stay in check with our identity of being someone who, like Gomer, is being pursued and loved by the God of the universe, the God who pursues us with relentless tenderness, and who won’t let us go no matter what, even when we’re pretending that we have a certain kind of relationship with Him that we don’t have.

In **PROVERBS 7:6-12** we see **THE WAY WE ENCOUNTER SIN**. We just walk by it, it calls out our name, and it catches our eye and our mind. Listen to Solomon’s words ...

PROVERBS 7:6-12 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

⁶ [*Wisdom/Jesus Christ talking*] At the window of my house I looked out through my lattice,

⁷ And I saw among the naive, and discerned among the youths, a young man lacking sense,

⁸ Passing through the street near her corner; and he takes the way to the house [*of foolishness*],

⁹ In the twilight, in the evening, in the middle of the night and *in* the darkness.

¹⁰ And behold, a woman *comes* to meet him, dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart.

¹¹ She is boisterous and rebellious; her feet do not remain at home;

¹² *she is* now in the streets, now in the squares, and lurks by every corner. [*emphasis added*]

You know as well as I do that we don't just take actions - sinful or otherwise - without spending time thinking about them first. And I hear God giving us our **SECOND FAITH LESSON** here this morning ...

FAITH LESSON ...

Like King David says in **PSALM 1** ... "Don't hang out with people who hate God. Don't visit places where sinful behavior is the norm instead of the exception. Don't make your home with people who love sin more than they love God. Do this and you'll make headway at living a life of wisdom instead of foolishness, a life connected with God and His ways, instead of disconnected from God and His ways."

And then Solomon goes on in **PROVERBS 7:13-21** and tells us about ***THE WAY SIN SEDUCES US, ENTICES US, AND ENTRAPS US.***

PROVERBS 7:13-21 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

¹³ So she seizes him and kisses him and with a brazen face she says to him:

¹⁴ "I was due to offer peace offerings; today I have paid my vows.

¹⁵ Therefore I have come out to meet you, to seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you.

¹⁶ "I have spread my couch with coverings, with colored linens of Egypt.

¹⁷ "I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.

¹⁸ Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with caresses.

¹⁹ For my husband is not at home, he has gone on a long journey.

²⁰ He has taken a bag of money with him, and at the full moon he will come home."

²¹ With her many persuasions she entices him; with her flattering lips she seduces him.

Do you see the bold and shameless ways sin traps us. Solomon's description of this young man in **v. 14** ... about him going to make his "peace offering" seems to indicate that, at least on the outside, he's a godly man. So don't go passing sin, any kind of sin off onto others, saying to yourself that you're untouchable. It's not true.

Gang, just like God doesn't show favoritism (**GALATIANS 2:6**) ... that God's love is unconditionally offered to anyone and everyone, and not to just a select few who happen to have the right name, the right education, or the right pedigree, so too Satan is no respecter of persons, and he's willing to take anyone down.

No wonder Moses wrote in **GENESIS 4:7b**, “sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.” And friends, what I want you to know, and the reason I focused in on the story of Hosea and Gomer at the beginning of this teaching, and how it reflected and illustrated God’s unconditional, ever-pursuing love for us, is because once we get a glimpse of this central part of who God is, we’ll start being equipped to live lives free from the bondage of sin, sexual or otherwise, and we’ll start being freed up to become the people of holiness God calls us to become. And I see a **THIRD FAITH LESSON** for us here this morning ...

FAITH LESSON ...

Just because a person attends church, doesn’t mean they’re a growing, maturing follower of Jesus Christ, or that they’re truly Christ-like in their thoughts, their words, their actions, or in how they’re prioritizing their choices. People who claim to be in relationship with God, but who live like the world, are devastating tools in the hands of Satan.

As a pastor-teacher for nearly 30 years now, I’ve had people tell me that it was *God’s will that they had a sexual affair*. This is the deception of sin. I’ve had people tell me that *God knew how badly they needed love, and since they weren’t being satisfied at home, that God had sent them a good sex partner to fulfill that need*. I’m not kidding. I’ve had someone use that as an excuse for his or her sinful behavior.

But friends, whether the sin is sexual or any other flavor or variety, God doesn’t tempt us with sin (**JAMES 1:13**). And when we buy into Satan’s lie that God tempts us with sin, and welcomes us into sin, we will **ALWAYS** eventually bring condemnation and shame onto the name of Jesus Christ, onto ourselves, and onto the church.

You can read and study more about the outcome of our flirting and consorting with sin in **PROVERBS 7:22-23**, and about the final warning and admonition Solomon gives to us about the danger of sin in **PROVERBS 7:24-27**. But you know already that the outcome is destruction, and that Solomon’s final warning and admonition finds its source in cultivating and remaining attentive to the Word of God. Because as Solomon would write later in *The Old Testament* book of **ECCLESIASTES** ...

ECCLESIASTES 12:13 (CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION)

¹³ Respect and obey God’s instruction to you through His Word. This is what life is all about.

This is what life is all about. Are you hearing what God is saying to you this morning? **FIRST**, about His unconditional love for you in the story of Hosea and Gomer? And **SECOND**, through Solomon’s words contrasting wisdom and foolishness, and the traps of sin? Which brings us to the third and final part of this morning’s study.

3. **LUKE 8:4-8, 11-15** **THE SEEDS AND THE SOIL: A PARABLE ABOUT GOD’S WORD AND OUR HEARTS.**



This is one of only a couple parables repeated in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (**MATTHEW**, **MARK**, and **LUKE**). It's often called *The Parable of the Sower*, but I prefer to call it *The Parable of the Seeds and the Soil*. As you listen to this parable, I encourage you to ponder God's **unconditional love** towards you, and your response to it ... the ways you're rejecting God's love by wrongly choosing the **compromise and foolishness** of sin, **OR** the ways you're accepting God's love by

rightly choosing **wisdom** and building your life on the foundation of **righteousness**.

In this parable Jesus tells us about **seed**, which is representative of the **Word of God**, and about this **seed** falling into **four different kinds of soil**, which are representative of the condition of our lives and our hearts when we come into contact with the **seed** - with the truth of God's Word.

LUKE 8:4-8 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

⁴ When a great crowd was gathered, and people were coming to Jesus from every town, He told them this story:

⁵ "A farmer went out to plant his seed. While he was planting, some seed fell by the road. People walked on the seed, and the birds ate it up.

⁶ Some seed fell on rock, and when it began to grow, it died because it had no water.

⁷ Some seed fell among thorny weeds, but the weeds grew up with it and choked the good plants.

⁸ And some seed fell on good ground and grew and made a hundred times more." As Jesus finished the story, He called out, "Let those with ears use them and listen!"

You and I continue on the journey of becoming more and more like Jesus Christ, to the exact extent that **we embrace the unconditional love of God**, as **we consistently choose wisdom over foolishness**, and as **we invite God's Word to permeate and saturate every part of who we are**.

And if you want to see the person of Jesus Christ birthed through you ... so that other people are seeing His thoughts, His words, His actions, His priorities, and His character in you, immersing your life into God's Word is the only way this will happen. Jesus goes on in **vv. 11-15** to explain this parable to His listeners ...

LUKE 8:11-12 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

¹¹ “This is what the story means: The seed is God’s Message [Word].

¹² The seed that fell beside the road is like the people who hear God’s teaching, but the devil comes and takes it away from them so they cannot believe it and be saved.

The **road** refers to the hard dirt paths dividing the fields. This ground was so compressed that there was no way the **seed** could penetrate the **soil** and **take root**. And so it just sat on the surface and the **birds** came and ate it up. The **birds** represent **Satan**, and the **path** represents **people who’ve hardened their hearts prior to hearing the Word**. And because they don’t want to know God, God’s Word falls on deaf ears.

Have you let Satan steal from you what God wants you to have? This morning, let’s invite Jesus to till up the **hard, resistant soil of our hearts** so we can receive what God has for us.

LUKE 8:13 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

¹³ The seed that fell on rock is like those who hear God’s teaching and accept it gladly, but they don’t allow the teaching to go deep into their lives. They believe for a while, but when trouble comes, they give up.

Some of the **soil** was shallow, just a little bit of dirt covering a deep layer of limestone. And the **seed** that fell here would **take root**, but it wouldn’t last long because the limestone would prevent a healthy root system from developing.

Jesus explains that this **soil** represents people who immediately receive the Word of God with joy and endure for a while, but then fall away when persecution or suffering arises. These folks are “**FAIR WEATHER BELIEVERS**”. Or to put it another way, when the time comes to stand up and be counted, these are the people who sit down.

Have the hard things you’re going through in life making it more difficult for you receive what God has for you? Has **suffering** quenched the life out of your faith? The answer to this problem won’t be found in **TRYING HARDER**, but in **SURRENDERING MORE FULLY TO GOD**. Like the Apostle Peter said in **FIRST PETER 5:7**, “cast your cares on God because God cares for you.”

LUKE 8:14 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

¹⁴ The seed that fell among the thorny weeds is like those who hear God’s teaching, but they let the worries, riches, and pleasures of this life keep them from growing and producing good fruit.

This **seed** grows, but so do weeds and thorns. These are the people who hear the Word of God, but end up getting so distracted by “**worries, riches, and pleasures of this life**” that they end up being unfruitful. Here’s how the Apostle Paul talks about this same thing in two of his letters ...

FIRST TIMOTHY 6:9-10 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

⁹⁻¹⁰ Those who want to become rich bring temptation to themselves and are caught in a trap. They want many foolish and harmful things that ruin and destroy people. The love of money causes all kinds of evil. Some people have left the faith, because they wanted to get more money, but they have caused themselves much sorrow.

GALATIANS 5:17 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

¹⁷ Our sinful selves want what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit wants what is against our sinful selves. The two are against each other, so you cannot do just what you please.

The word **worry** comes from the German word **wurgen**, meaning to **choke** or to **strangle**. And it makes sense, right? I mean, there's a lot in this life to **worry** about ... relationships, jobs, school, friends, money, sex, the government, wars, health concerns, children ... and the list can go on and on.

But the good news is that weeds can be pulled, and thorns can be eradicated. But again, it has to do with our choices to get into the Word of God, and to invite the Word of God to get into us. Sunday teachings, our daily Bible Reading plan, a Community Group, Bible Study Fellowship, Celebrate Recovery ... the more of God's Word we take into our hearts and minds, the less control **worry** has over us ... and the less God's life is **choked out of us**.

Some people let **INTELLECTUALISM** choke the life out of their search for faith. These are the people, for whom God's Word and truth **hasn't even had the chance to get pressed into the soil of their hearts or take root**. It's just snatched away by Satan's plans to keep them sprouting death, not life. If this is you, don't let your intellect kill your soul. God wants us to seek Him, know Him, and love Him. Surrender your mind to God and let Him transform you!

Some people let **SUFFERING** choke the life out of their faith, and faith out of their life. These are the people, for whom God's Word and God's truth has **fallen into rocky soil, and without moisture, the seed dies**, and they turn away from Jesus Christ. If this is you, invite God to teach you what the Apostle Paul wrote about in **ROMANS 5**, that suffering can be a path to patience, character, and hope.

Other people let **SUCCESS AND MONEY** choke the life out of their faith, and faith out of their life. These are the people, for whom God's Word and truth has fallen in among the **thorns, and the worry caused by the thorns suffocates the seed and it dies**, and they turn away from Jesus Christ. If this is you, don't let anything get your eyes off Jesus Christ and God's Word. The distractions are many, but the cost is always high. Keep your eyes on Jesus, the **“author and the finisher of your faith.”**

But hey, good news! Not all the seed fell was eaten by birds, scorched by the sun, or suffocated by thorns. As Jesus finishes this parable, we see that some seed fell into good soil and brought forth a good harvest.

LUKE 8:15 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

¹⁵ And the seed that fell on the good ground is like those who hear God's teaching with good, honest hearts and obey it and patiently produce good fruit.

But the seed that fell into the good ground, took root, grew strong, and produced a crop that was 30, 60, or 100 times greater than what was sown. And when we realize that an especially good harvest for a field during New Testament times would be about 10 times what was sown, Jesus is talking about a miracle crop here. There are people who hear the Word of God and accept it, and spread the good news of Jesus Christ's message ... and this miracle is the only way to explain the growth of Christianity from 12 people just a little more than 2,000 years ago, to a worldwide flock of over 2 billion today. That's solid growth!

Friends, let's leave here today with three truths firmly pressed into our hearts and minds ...

1. **HOSEA AND GOMER** **GOD LOVES US UNCONDITIONALLY.
LET'S BELIEVE IT.**
2. **PROVERBS 7 & 9** **WE CAN CHOOSE WISDOM OVER FOOLISHNESS.
LET'S CHOOSE WISDOM.**
3. **LUKE 8:4-8, 11-15** **THE CONDITION OF THE SOIL OF OUR
HEARTS IS UP TO US.
LET'S CHOOSE TO BE GOOD GROUND.**

**PROVERBS 31:10-31 ... THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN ...
COME PRAYING AND EXPECTING!**