



Life Group Study Notes

"First Things First: The Priority of God's Word"

Dr. Rice Brooks - January 15, 2017

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- What is one of the first books you read on your own that you can remember?
- What is the most you have ever paid for a book? What book was it?
- Besides the Bible what is the most impactful book you have read?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Mark 4:14-20 ESV *"The sower sows the word. And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."*

- The Path
 - God's words are light and life, and possess power to bring about reconciliation, cleansing, and transformation. For this reason Satan (a rebellious angelic creature opposed to God) hates humanity, which is made in God's image, and seeks to rob people of that which could eternally save them. We have a real spiritual foe who seeks to keep God's words from taking root in our hearts. We must therefore be all the more diligent to read Scripture and listen attentively to biblical preaching.
- The Rocky Ground
 - Some people immediately respond to God's words with faith and joy, and begin to follow Jesus. But then just as quickly they abandon their pursuit of God and their obedience to Jesus when troubles or opposition comes because of God's truth and doing God's will. The real reason for their suddenly turning back is their failure to allow God's words take take root in their hearts. They failed to develop deeper beliefs and convictions based on God's truth.
- The Thorns
 - Other people also begin to follow Jesus and may even do so for some time. However, they too eventually wander away. The things that cause them to stop following Jesus are the normal

distractions and enticements of this world: responsibilities, materialism, and various pleasures. It takes vigilance to ensure that God's words retain preeminence in our hearts. Giving regular attention to Scripture through reading, conversation, and listening to preaching and teaching is needed.

- The Good Soil
 - Those whose lives are permanently changed and who in turn become transformative are those who embrace God's words and continue in them. They respect and value God's words to such a degree that they continue to adjust their thoughts, beliefs, values, and choices according to God's revealed truth. Their lives become spiritually strong and they become fruitful. They bear fruit both in terms of becoming more like Christ and in terms of influencing others to also follow Christ.

Proverbs 4:20-22 ESV *My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.*

- God's words are like the words of the rhetorical father writing in this Proverb. If we will value and prioritize Scripture and diligently give attention to it, storing it up in our hearts, we will discover and experience God's life and will find healing for our souls and our bodies. Often when our souls are well, our bodies will also be more healthy. God's truth liberates and heals. He cares about every aspect of our humanity.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related point for discussion.

- Have you read the entire Bible? If yes, how has it helped you in your current reading of Scripture? If not, would you be interested in making a personal commitment to read all the books of Scripture this year (or some reasonable time frame) that you haven't read yet?
- What hinders you most from reading or studying the Bible more?
- Do you have a routine for Bible reading and study? Are there any changes or improvements you should make to your plan for Bible reading and study?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Ask God to increase our hunger and thirst for his Word.
- Ask God whether you should enroll in Bethel's School of Discipleship or otherwise commit to some practical way to get into Scripture in a regular, disciplined way.
- Ask God to give you insight into his Word as you read and study it, and to plant it deep into your heart.