

# Hearing God's word discussion guide

based on **Mark 4.1-20** (Linked to sermon of 28/1/24)

which can be accessed at [www.stjamesbythepark.org/talks](http://www.stjamesbythepark.org/talks)

*This was part of a series on intentional discipleship, with a visiting preacher (Kunle Adeyolu) from Limitless Mercy Church.*

Intro: (Sunday's service was part of the week of prayer for Christian unity, so ...) What other churches locally have you been to? What have you appreciated about their ministry and mission? What (if anything!) have visits to other churches made you appreciate more about own ministry and mission?

Read Mark 4.1-9

We're familiar with Jesus' own explanation of the parable. But imagine for a moment you're part of the original crowd, by the water's edge, hearing the parable without the explanation. What do you make of the parable?

Why do you think Jesus speaks in parables so often?

Read Mark 4.14-20

Kunle talked about the four different soils representing four types of heart.

1. The Hardened Heart (the seed that falls along the path). When have you seen (in your own life, or others' lives) hardened hearts – Satan taking away the word as it is sown?

Read Proverbs 28.14 which talks of the dangers of a hardened heart. Why is this true?

2. The Shallow Heart (the seed that falls among the rocky places, that springs up quickly but lasts only a short time because it has no root). When have you seen (in your own life, or others' lives) shallow hearts – a quick, but short-lived response to the message of Jesus, especially when trouble or persecution come because of the word?

Kunle warned against treating the Bible as merely a book, instead of inspiration from God. How might that produce a shallow heart?

What else might cause a shallow heart – and what could you do to guard against that in your own life, and others' lives?

3. The Divided Heart (the seed that falls among thorns, that grows but is soon choked). When have you seen (in your own life, or others' lives) divided hearts – where the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in to choke the word, making it unfruitful?

What could you do to guard against a divided heart in your own life, and others' lives?

4. The Receptive Heart (the seed that falls on good soil). When have you seen (in your own life, or others' lives) receptive hearts – where the word of Jesus is heard, accepted and produces a fruitful crop?

What could you do to encourage receptive hearts in your own life, and others' lives?

Read Mark 4.10-13

The parable of the sower has been called 'the parable of parables' – because it goes some way to explaining why Jesus spoke in parables so much. But the answer it gives here doesn't seem that encouraging!

Which of these 4 hearts have the disciples got?

Which have the crowds got?

Which have you got?

Spend some time praying for your own hearts to be receptive; and pray for our church as we embark on Challenge Mark – not just that we would have receptive hearts, but that as we allow the word to sink deep into our lives, it would produce a crop – some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.