

Luke 8:1 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him,

Luke 8:2 and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,

Luke 8:3 and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

Luke 8:4 And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable,

Luke 8:5 “A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it.

Luke 8:6 And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

Luke 8:7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it.

Luke 8:8 And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said these things, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Luke 8:9 And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant,

Luke 8:10 he said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’

Luke 8:11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

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Jesus did not preach the gospel by Himself, but took the twelve with Him, as well as many sisters. It would have been easy for Him to have gone by Himself and done everything Himself. Yet He labored to raise up others (pillars), and had teams. This was one of several teams that He had.

Are we independent in our labor and service for the Lord? Sometimes, we may labor hard and diligently to serve or take care of a certain field in the church life. We may not lack consecration. Yet, even in our service, we may not know God that much. We may do many things, and even be obedient to the Lord to preach the gospel or shepherd people. But without companions or a team, our service may not be that effective, and we may even, during a difficult situation, give up. This has happened to several servants of God. Why? Because of independence and lack of fellowship with team members. When we preach the gospel or serve, do we bring others to preach the gospel with us, to serve with us? This will be our salvation. This will keep us in the church life, and will cause us to know God Himself as the One who is leading the church.

Luke 8:3 and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

Joanna was the wife of Herod's household manager. Herod was the king during Jesus' life on earth, and was eventually instrumental in putting Jesus to death on the cross. Yet his wife followed Jesus and even ministered to Him from her own possessions. There is no record of Herod ever wanting to follow Jesus. Did Herod oppose his wife following Jesus? The Bible does not say, but there is no indication that he did, and it is probable that he approved of his wife's action since she had been healed by Jesus, and Jesus allowed her to accompany Him.

We always say that the husband and wife should together follow the Lord, and this is absolutely true. There are many such examples in the Bible, the most prominent being perhaps Aquila and Priscilla. Yet, the example of Joanna is unique. Sometimes, the husband or the wife may not follow each other in the way of following the Lord, even in the church life. Yet, either one may still be supportive, or may not hinder, the other from doing so. We should treasure such a living. Whether both spouses together give themselves to the Lord in absolute harmony is in the Lord's hands. But, either party may still follow Him and even participate in the financial grace offering to support the servants of God and full timers, as Joanna and the other women did. What a beautiful picture. In man's eyes, this may not be the ideal situation. Yet, in God's sovereign arrangement, such a situation may still be a blessing to the church.

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The Lord Jesus preached in Judea for a period of time (**John 2:13 - 5:47**); after returning from Judea to Galilee, He used Capernaum as the center and preached in the vicinity (**Luke 4:16 – 7:50**). From here, He began to travel around Galilee, preaching through cities and villages. We also need to learn such a way of preaching, testifying and prophesying.

Luke 8:3 shows that in this particular period of time, Jesus and His disciples went out to preach, not relying on miracles to supply their needs, but rather on a group of women to provide goods or finance for their living. Therefore, financial grace offering is a crucial exercise to spread the gospel in many cities in Canada (for example).

Luke 8:2, 3

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Why were some women specifically mentioned?

Who were they? They used to be controlled by evil spirits or frustrated by infirmities, and were healed by Jesus. From the Bible, we know that Jesus healed many people, but I don't think all these people, who had received the grace of Jesus, followed Him. They perhaps just stayed in the condition of enjoying the grace (**Are we in the same condition of just enjoying the grace of Jesus?**). However, these women not only faithfully followed Jesus, but they also devoted what they had to supply the needs of Jesus and His disciples. It means that they contributed to the preaching of Jesus and His disciples. (**Are we a supplier in our church life, not only in materials but also spiritually?**) These women were faithful followers of Jesus. When Jesus was crucified, they were there (Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40-41, Luke 23:49); They were the first to look for Jesus after His death (Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1, John 20:1). At that time, they faced the threat of the Jews who might harm them, but they still sought Jesus because of their love for Him. (**How much do I love Jesus?**)

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A sower in Luke 8:5 normally means Christ. However, in this fellowship I would like to regard “A sower” as the corporate Christ in a church such as Montreal. **Luke 8:5-7** indicates that the increase and growth of life in a church is quite challenging.

In the church life we need to be diligent sowers to sow the seed (the word of life including our living testimony) to the people around us with many prayers and much fellowship, and in small and large teams. Such a sowing process needs to be focused on raising up the pillars such as **Luke 8:8**, but rather broadly for common people or saints such as described in **Luke 8:5-7**.

A parable is a way of expressing profound truths using familiar, everyday life pictures. If the parable is not explained in detail, people may not understand the essence of the truth. And listeners’ understanding of parables depends on whether they really desire the Lord. For people who do not look for the Lord, parables are not meaningful. If someone has a hunger for the Lord, then he or she will ask questions concerning the parable, prompting the Lord to speak details of the truth to them via relatively mature saints, and they will gain the Lord. The crucial exercises involve letting the word of the Lord be rooted and grounded in our heart (whether that of the sowers or the listeners). Then the fruit will be produced.

Luke 8:9 And when his **disciples asked him what this parable** meant,

Luke 8:10 he said, “**To you** it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’

Disciples mean those who follow the Lord diligently and often ask questions because they would like to know God, God’s purposes and the kingdom of God.

These words do not mean that God does not want people to understand the mystery of the kingdom of God, but point out a sad fact, namely that since many people have no intention to pursue the kingdom of God (perhaps just seeking the Lord’s outward blessings), there is no means for them to understand the mystery of the kingdom of God (refer to Matt. 13:10-16 quoted on the next page).

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The disciples asked Jesus a question because they did not understand. They were together as a team. In this team environment, they were able to ask questions. Interestingly, Jesus said it had been given to them to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but not to others. Why was this the case?

We may hear the word of God again and again, and not understand. This is normal. What is not normal is that we do not ask questions. Often, we may read the Bible by ourselves, not understand, and give up, saying the Bible is too hard to understand. Indeed, it is very hard to understand! However, if we have companions or a team of brothers and sisters, we will not independently struggle to understand the Bible. Instead, by living a church life in teams, serving others, preaching the gospel and participating in the financial grace offering, the Lord may speak to us through the Bible. Will we understand everything in the Bible? Maybe only a small percentage. But if we ask the Lord, and if we ask questions of saints who know the Lord, we may both hear and see the Lord a little bit. Such a hearing and seeing will strengthen our faith in the Lord.

Matt. 13:10 Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?”

Matt. 13:11 And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

Matt. 13:12 **For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.**

Matt. 13:13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Matt. 13:14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: **““You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.”**

Matt. 13:15 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’

Matt. 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.

Therefore, in the church life, we really need to know every saint well, in any particular time period, and their heart's desire for the Lord. Otherwise, we may lose much of our precious service time and our own growth in life.

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Luke 8:15 As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

The seed is the word of God. In the church life we are the sowers in the Lord and for the Lord. Do we have a healthy habit to read, pursue, understand the word of God, and have fellowship with the saints, including asking questions? If not, our sowing is very shallow and weak and our growth will be slow, if there is indeed any.

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Sometimes, we need to stop and wait to see or hear what the Lord says to us because we often tend to do this and to do that for Him in a hurry.

Praise our Lord, our God is wise and almighty to lead us.