

Seed And Soil

Mike Riley

In farming or gardening, the productivity of seed is directly proportionate to the fertility of the soil it's sown in. Even if the seed is good, if it's planted in unfertile soil, it will either not germinate or will only produce a sickly and unproductive plant. And so it is with the word of God and human hearts.

In the "parable of the sower" (Luke 8:4-15; Matthew 13:1-9; Matthew 13:18-23), four kinds of soil are mentioned: (1) the wayside (Luke 8:5); (2) rocky places (Luke 8:6); (3) soil in which thorns are abundant (Luke 8:7), and (4) good soil (Luke 8:8). Each of these represents four different kinds of human hearts (cf. Luke 8:12; Luke 8:15; Matthew 13:15; Matthew 13:19), while the seed is called "the word of God" (Luke 8:11).

Please note that the deficiencies of the first three kinds of soil in this parable, do not cast reflection upon the innate power of the seed to produce life. The problem is in the soil – not in the seed.

We should never speak of the word of God as being powerless to convert men, because the potential to produce new life and change men's hearts is found in the word of God (see Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Peter 1:22-25).

Someone might ask, "Why doesn't the "seed" (God's word) always bring forth an abundant harvest? Simply because the "soil" (the mind, or heart of man), is not receptive to it or is encumbered with the "cares of this world" and the "pleasures of this life" (Matthew 13:22; Luke 8:14) . We can't blame God for our lack of productivity, for the kind of soil we are has been our choice (note the word, "received" in the Matthew text (Matthew 13:20; Matthew 13:22-23).

What are the requirements of fertile soil (hearts)? Jesus tells us, "they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience," (Luke 8:15). This writer believes there are still human beings with good hearts that want to "hear" the word of God, and "keep it."



Don't Drink the Water

By Alan Smith

"My husband and I were cleaning the church building one evening and our three-year-old son was 'helping' us. We walked up to the baptistry to make sure nothing was in the water that shouldn't be and our son said, 'You can't drink that water.' I asked him, 'Why can't we drink the water?' and he replied, 'Because it has sins in it.'" (taken from "A Sunday Afternoon With the Preachers' Wives")

It does seem to make sense, doesn't it? If all our sins are washed away at the point of baptism (Acts 22:16), it's easy to see how a child could mistakenly think they just collect there in the water. If that were really true, it would be important to drain the baptistry frequently!

I'm thankful, though, that those sins don't collect in the bottom of a pool of water. They don't get piled up in a closet somewhere ready to be pulled out at a later time like a load of dirty laundry. They don't get stored on a hard drive in case a "search" needs to be made to find them. No! Thank God, they are removed, blotted out, wiped clean by the blood of Jesus Christ, and we are able to rise from the water a new creature!

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12)

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church of Christ at Alisal

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Jude the Obscure

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. (John 1:1-5)

MEETING UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

Bible Classes..... 9:00 A.M.
Assemblies..... 10:00 A.M. & 5:00 P.M.

<http://churchofchristalisal.com/>

WEDNESDAY

Bible Class, Singing, & Prayer..... 6:30 P.M.

Welcome

Good Morning Brothers and Sisters!



This Week's Sermon's

**A Look at the Book of Colossians
A.M. & P.M.**

The Erosion of Marriage
by Wayne Jackson



According to a 2004 census, some 5,080,000 American couples are living together without the benefit of marriage. Several decades ago this practice was relatively rare and considered a sexual aberration; today it scarcely raises an eyebrow.

Even in religious circles the walls of sexual restraint have crumbled. For example, according to a recent article in the New York Times, a special committee report on "Human Sexuality" within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) called on the church to replace the historic Christian prohibition of sexual relations outside of marriage with a "new ethic" evaluating sexual activity, whether between married or unmarried people, or between heterosexuals or homosexuals, by broadly defined standards of responsibility, "mutuality," and caring. Such has created a furor with many Presbyterians.

The allowance of so-called "gay marriages," in both Massachusetts and California, demonstrates how far from legal rationalism our nation has departed.

Numerous professing "Christian" clergymen are suggesting that the sexual regulations set forth in the Bible merely were cultural and the restrictions imposed in biblical times may be ignored in our contemporary, "post-modern" world.

This position was argued recently at the self-designated "Christian Scholars Conference" on the campus of David Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee. Jared Cramer, who is currently affiliated with the Anglican Church (Episcopal), contended that certain sexual stipulations of the New Testament are merely the result of temporal cultural conditions, and are not binding rules for modern society.

Cramer maintains that a great variety of sexual unions are permissible, provided they are: "loving," "faithful," and "monogamous" (Homosexuality: But Why?). Strangely, he inconsistently appeals to the same Bible he largely rejects for the authority supporting those qualities he contends are essential for validating sexual relationships!

New Testament Teaching

The teaching of the New Testament regarding sexual conduct, however, is not cultural; rather, it is based upon moral principles divinely imposed by the Creator, metaphorically depicted as the "Potter" who "has a right over the clay" (Romans 9:21). These restrictions are to prevail in all societies and for all time. If one contends that "fornication"

is simply a culturally conditioned activity, he might as well argue that idolatry, thievery, covetousness, extortion, drunkenness, and murder similarly depend upon the fluctuations of culture (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:9-10).

In the New Testament, all sexual activity between people outside of a legitimate marriage relationship is designated as "fornication." The Greek word *porneia* is a generic term, and it includes sexual intercourse between single people, or married people with other partners (Danker et al. 2000, 854). *Porneia* also embraces such actions as homosexuality, promiscuity, paedophilia, and prostitution; in a word, "any kind of illegitimate sexual intercourse" (Reisser 1971, 497).

The inspired Paul clearly taught that to avoid "fornications" each man could have his own wife, and each woman could have her own husband (1 Corinthians 7:2). If one cannot control his (or her) desire for sexual fulfillment, there is a solution, and it is marriage, not promiscuous indulgence (7:9).

In Corinth, sexual license was the order of the day, yet the apostle, bucking the "culture" of that environment, warned: "The body is not for fornication" (6:13). When an unmarried couple engages in fornication, the bed is "defiled" and God will judge this immoral activity (Hebrews 13:4; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7). Jesus Christ uncompromisingly taught that fornication degrades and condemns a person (Matthew 15:19-20).

Living together, apart from a legitimate marital relationship, is not God's will for man and woman, and many harmful consequences result from ignoring the divine pattern.

For example, according to an article published some years back in *Psychology Today* some studies have shown that eighty percent of the women who live with their spouses before marriage are more likely to be divorced or separated than those who do not. There also appears to be a higher percentage of violence—thirty percent among couples who live together without a marriage commitment (TIME 1988, 54).

God's plan was designed for maximum human happiness, the welfare of society, and the facilitation of one's journey to heaven! Violations of the sacred sexual code assault each of these goals.

GOOD MORNING

Announcements

1. Brother Paul will be giving the invitation this Wednesday evening.
2. Wednesday evening class, "Romans - chapter 6 #1". Be prepared - bring your notebook and your listening ears!

~ On the Prayer list ~

Rosemarie's mother - for healing from her stroke.

Norma - for spritual and physical healing.

Karen Bailin - for mending of her broken arm and damaged leg.

All of us - for a more dedicated Christian life.

Have a blessed week!