

Four Hearts

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The title above doesn't refer to a "hand" in a card game. Rather, it relates to Jesus' parable about a farmer who sowed seed in his field (Luke 8:5–15). Of the thirty or so parables He told, this is one of the very few that He explained in detail. He tells us plainly: "The seed is the word of God" (v. 11), thereby implying that the "sower" is one who teaches God's Word. The four kinds of "soils" represent the various kinds of human hearts into which the Gospel may fall. Let us examine them briefly:

- **The Wayside** describes paths that ran through the unfenced Galilean fields and were packed by the feet of travelers. Seeds that fell thereon remained on the surface, and birds soon devoured them. Jesus said that this soil represents hearts that do not "understand" the Word (Mat. 13:19). That is, their hearts were as hard concerning the Gospel as the wayside soil was concerning the seed. Some have such closed minds toward God, His Son, and the Bible that they refuse all the evidence testifying to their existence and/or genuineness. The devil will waste little time taking the Word from them.
- **The Rock** ("rocky places" – Mat. 13:5, 20) describes thin topsoil on top of bedrock. Thus the seed enters the soil, germinates, and sprouts, but promptly withers and dies because its roots cannot penetrate the rock and find necessary moisture. The Lord said this soil represents the receptive, impulsive, albeit shallow heart that joyously embraces the Gospel and "believes for awhile." Not having counted the cost of discipleship, when temptations or persecutions arise, these "fall away" for lack of root.
- **The Thorns** describes soil that is not cleared in preparation for the seed. The seed germinates and sprouts, but thorns overpower and starve it. This is the heart that has not repented of various "thorns" of behavior (i.e., "cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life"). Such competing influences for our time, energy, and money leave us spiritually starved and will prevent our bearing any spiritual fruit.
- **The Good Ground** describes soil that is open for the seed, has depth, and has been cleared of competing influences. This, said Jesus, is the "honest and good heart" that belongs to one who will hear (i.e., obey) the Word, hold it fast, and produce manifold fruit. The key word here is *honest*, for no heart can be good that is not honest.

The heart of every person is included in one of these types of soil. **Which type are you?**

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