

Prepared to Listen



The **Community Bible Experience** offers an immersive approach to Scripture. Not a verse here or a chapter there, but whole books read in their original context. It's not another Bible study. It's a fresh, open conversation about the Bible—one that anyone can join.

Jesus told his followers, "*Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.*" His disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, "*The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables...*"

Key Question: What "secrets of the kingdom of God" does Jesus want us to have and to understand?

For the next 8 weeks we will be seeking to understand these secrets through looking at the following...

- 1) The writer, the situation, and their encounter with Jesus. (OBSERVE)
- 2) How these personal experiences created a hunger and thirst to know God and His purpose for them. (REFLECT)
- 3) What is necessary to "see & hear" God's hopes for us in today's world. (RESPOND)

The Kingdom of God is where our best dreams come from and our truest prayers. We glimpse it at those moments when we find ourselves being better than we are and wiser than we know. We catch sight of it when at some moment of crisis, a strength seems to come to us that is greater than our own strength. The Kingdom of God is where we belong. It is home, and whether we realize it or not, I think we are all of us homesick for it."

Frederick Buechner **OBSERVE: Luke 8:1-15** (page 19-20, Books of the Bible)

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: "A farmer went out to sow his seed.



As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up.

Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture.

Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants.

Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown."

When he said this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

His disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand."

Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

REFLECT: How does one PREPARE TO LISTEN?

Q: What does an athlete need to participate in any sport?



Q: How does God break up the soil of our lives that we might be prepared to listen?

Q: What blocks or hinders our ability to hear and see what God is trying to tell and show us?

Q: What is one of the secrets we learn from Jesus in this passage?

True success and fulfillment in this life (and in the next) ALWAYS...

As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. (pg. 17, Luke 6:46-48)

Then he taught me, and he said to me, "Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live. Proverbs 4:4

WEEKLY STUDY CHALLENGE

A. Read WEEK ONE (pgs.1-54) of "The Books of the Bible." If you prefer, you can download the CBE app, add the CBE readings to your YouVersion Bible app, or listen to it via audio. For all of these resources, go to: <http://cbe.covchurch.org/resources/>

B. As you do your readings, consider these 5 questions... (which will be discussed in various small groups each week)



- 1. What's something you noticed for the first time?**
- 2. What questions did you have?**
- 3. Was there anything that bothered you?**
- 4. What did you learn about loving God?**
- 5. What did you learn about loving others?**

C. Understanding the Writer of Luke & Acts

Luke the physician and companion of Paul is most likely the author of the Gospel by his name. He was also the author of its companion work, The Book of Acts. Luke-Acts makes up 28% of the New Testament--more than that written by either Paul or John.

His purpose in writing: It was written to strengthen the faith of all believers and to answer the attacks of unbelievers. Luke wanted to show that the place of the Gentile Christian in God's kingdom is based on the teaching of Jesus. He wanted to commend the preaching of the gospel to the whole world. He wanted to provide a guide to understanding Jesus teachings that would show Jesus and the Holy Spirit's power in the face of bitter persecution.

If you haven't signed up for CBE yet, there's still time to jump in with us! Stop by the CBE table, the church office, or sign up today!