
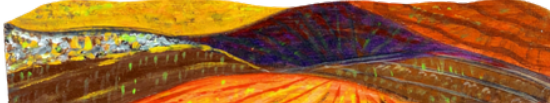

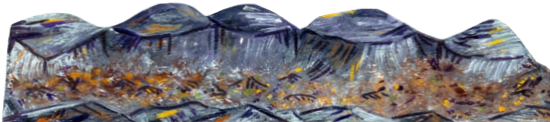


# The Parable of the Sower: A Spiritual Path

George's notes from the porch conversation 7/7/26  
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23



Deep	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Thorny</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>real growth is choked by competing loyalties</i></p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Good Soil</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>deep roots, bears fruit</i></p> 
Shallow	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Path</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>hardened, the Word never takes</i></p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Rocky</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>sincere, joyful reception, no depth, can't survive under pressure</i></p> 
	Divided Enthusiasm	Undivided Enthusiasm



**Peter** and **Thomas** serve as examples of the movement from rocky soil to good soil.

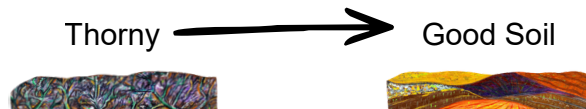
**Peter** has undivided enthusiasm when he says “even if I must die with you, I will not deny you,” but lacks depth; he collapses instantly under real pressure. The roots form after the resurrection encounter and restoration on the shore (John 21 “do you love me?”) Peter’s preaching at Pentecost (Acts) reveals good soil-- he preaches with enthusiasm and deep roots. Peter needed an experience deep enough to root what was already sincere in him.

**Thomas’s** doubt is rocky soil (“My Lord and my God” is deeper because of the demand for evidence, not despite it.)

#### Practices for moving from rocky soil to good soil

The deficit is root, not desire. The need is to build sustained capacity to stay under pressure. You might try:

- Centering Prayer
- Rule of Life
- Daily Office



**Zacchaeus** and **Augustine** serve as examples of the movement from rocky soil to good soil.

**Zacchaeus**-- Wealth is explicitly the choking agent in the parable, and Zacchaeus’s whole story is a man whose “cares of the world and deceitfulness of riches” got named and renounced on the spot: “half of my goods I will give to the poor.”

The Word had clearly already taken root (he’s climbing a tree, desperate to see Jesus); the movement is the thorns getting cleared, not the seed being replanted

**Augustine** is the traditions greaty thorny ground case study-- confessions is essentially a memoir of divided loyalty (ambition, career, discarded love) choking a Word that has been present since childhood via his mother Monica.

The garden scene (“tolle lege”-- take up and read) isn’t new seed, its the thorns finally getting torn out after years of real, but strangled, growth.

**In contrast**, the rich young ruler (Mark 10) is presented with an identical thorny diagnosis as Zacchaeus-- and he walks away sorrowful. Same soil, same choking, no conversion.

## Practices for moving from thorny soil to good soil

The deficit is divided loyalty, not ignorance-- something has to be cleared out. You might try:

- Ignation discernment of spirits (The Examen)
- simplicity, fasting
- Sabbath keeping (refuse anxious productivity that thorns represent)
- Spiritual Direction



**Saul/Paul, Nichodemus, and Mary Magdalene** serve as examples of the movement from rocky soil to good soil.

**Saul/Paul** is the dramatic case-- not shallow but actually hardened and hostile, closed to the Word, "breathing threats."

The Damascus road isn't gradual root-deepening, it's the ground itself being broken open by force. Note: The conversation isn't gentle; sometimes hardened ground doesn't soften, it gets plowed!

**Nichodemus** is the slow-burn case-- comes by night, tentative, unclear where he stands; but track him across John's gospel: a cautious defense in 7:50-51, then showing up with 75 pounds of spices for Jesus's burial in 19:39. No dramatic movement, just quiet accumulation from guarded to committed.

### **Mary Magdalene**

Before: Luke 8:2 says seven demons came out of her. That's not quite "path" in the parable's own terms (the path is about refusal, not affliction), but it's a useful adjacent category — ground so overtaken it couldn't receive anything at all. Bondage, not choice.

After: She becomes, arguably, the deepest-rooted disciple in any Gospel — and the timing is the whole argument. At the exact moment the rocky-ground disciples run (the men flee at Gethsemane, Peter denies three times by the fire), Mary Magdalene is standing at the foot of the cross. John names her there specifically (19:25). Same pressure that exposed Peter's shallow root is the moment that reveals hers goes deep.

Then she's first to the tomb, in the dark, before anyone else has worked up the nerve (John 20:1). And in the garden scene, weeping, refusing to leave even when she doesn't yet recognize who she's talking to — that's undivided attention persisting through confusion, not despite it. "Rabbouni" comes only after she's stayed long enough, present enough, to hear her own name spoken

Practices for moving from path to good soil

Psalms of Lament

Confession (rite of Reconciliation)

Encounter (not argument)

Patient accompaniment (without urgency)

General Comments

1. The movement is diagonal, straight up, or straight across but rarely more than one at the same time. Growth is not a total transformation at once.
2. The practices create conditions for movement but don't guarantee it. They are not techniques for improvement; grace transforms, we consent.