

Daily devotion close to God (4) January 21 –January 27, 2008

Monday (Jan.21)	<p>Scripture: Mark 4:1-9,13-24</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are <i>the four results of sowing</i> in Jesus' parable?¹ 2. Does this parable <i>tell us if God requires our response</i> when we receive His word? (James 1:22) 3. In the first three cases, <i>if we are to change the situation, what obstacles</i> do we need to overcome? ² (John 12:24) <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">Parable</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">Explanation</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">Required Action</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Taken away by bird</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Attack from Satan</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Spiritual warfare, repentance of sin.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Stony ground</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Receive by emotion, fail by encountering difficulties</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Making commitment to walk with God.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Among thorns</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">The cares of this world, The deceitfulness of riches, The lusts of other things</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Self-examination on distractions (i.e. bad habits) to live a holy life.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. What is <i>the indication of full understanding of God's word?</i> (Galatians 5:22-23) 	Parable	Explanation	Required Action	Taken away by bird	Attack from Satan	Spiritual warfare, repentance of sin.	Stony ground	Receive by emotion, fail by encountering difficulties	Making commitment to walk with God.	Among thorns	The cares of this world, The deceitfulness of riches, The lusts of other things	Self-examination on distractions (i.e. bad habits) to live a holy life.
Parable	Explanation	Required Action											
Taken away by bird	Attack from Satan	Spiritual warfare, repentance of sin.											
Stony ground	Receive by emotion, fail by encountering difficulties	Making commitment to walk with God.											
Among thorns	The cares of this world, The deceitfulness of riches, The lusts of other things	Self-examination on distractions (i.e. bad habits) to live a holy life.											
Tuesday (Jan.22)	<p>Scripture: Mark 4:10-12</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Was it Jesus' <i>intention to use parable to hide</i> "the secret of the kingdom"?³ 2. What is "the secret of the kingdom"?⁴ 3. Why does Jesus <i>indicate in Vs 13 that to understand this parable is the prerequisite of understanding other parables and the kingdom of God?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happen if a person is not willing to respond to God's word? (Refer to the parable of the sower) 												
Wednesday (Jan.23)	<p>Scripture: Mark 4:26-29</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are "<i>the seed</i>" and "<i>kingdom of God</i>" referring to? 2. Did the seed grow by human effort? Vs. 28 3. What human effort <i>is required for the kingdom of God</i> in this parable? Vs.26, 29 (Luke 10:2) 4. As action is part of our faith, <i>are we willing to participate</i> in the work of God's kingdom? (James 2:17-18) 												

¹ These four results could mean four different types of people, but could also mean four types of situation, regardless of the same or different person.

² Jesus certainly indicates in this parable that there is a price to follow God's word and to live a fruitful life.

³ Vs 12 is taken from Isaiah 6:9. ⁴ Jesus refer to this passage in order to bring up the true answer to prophet Isaiah's question in Isaiah 6:11. Isaiah 6:13 clearly indicates that Israelites will truly understand God's word when messiah (holy seed) arrives (stump in the land).

⁴ Jesus points to the prophecy of Isaiah, which regards the coming of messiah, to refer to himself, the gospel, as the secret of kingdom.

Daily devotion close to God (4) January 21 –January 27, 2008

Thursday (Jan.24)	<p>Scripture: Mark 4:30-34</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why did Jesus <i>only explain the parables</i> to the disciples? (Vs. 33)⁵ 2. Does this parable <i>also accurately describe the growth of Christianity</i> as the kingdom of God? 3. How is this parable of <i>kingdom of God different from</i> the previous one?⁶ 4. As God's kingdom grows, what is one of its functions? Vs.32 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Jesus referring to by having birds to perch on its branch?
Friday (Jan.25)	<p>Scripture: Mark 4:35-41</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How did <i>the disciples' understanding of Jesus change</i> after this incidence? (Psalm 89:9) 2. What did <i>Jesus rebuke the disciples of</i>? Vs.40⁷ 3. In this incidence, <i>what does Mark want to show regarding</i> the lesson on faith? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there any difficulty in life that we are facing? Are we still on the same boat with Jesus? (Psalm 46:10)
Saturday (Jan.26)	<p>Scripture: Mark 5:1-17</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is <i>the sole mission for Jesus to cross</i> the Lake? Vs.2, 18 2. What was <i>the crowd's reaction to</i> this miracle? Vs.15-17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why didn't the crowd happy for this miracle? • Imagining if these demons are powerful enough to cause 2000 pigs to go insane, how great the suffering is the person got possessed. 3. What was <i>the man's respond to</i> this salvation? Vs. 18, 20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As we have received even a greater salvation, have we responded in the same way as this man?
Sunday (Jan.27)	<p>Scripture: Psalm 37: 18-24</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the passage <i>describe a "happily ever after"</i> life of the righteous? Vs. 19, 24 2. What is <i>the character of righteous</i>? How is it <i>different from</i> the wicked?⁵ Vs. 21 3. What is <i>the benefit of being known</i> by God? Vs.18, 22, 23 4. Reflect on <i>Mark 4:35-41 again. Pray for our faith in Him at times of</i> trouble.

⁵ As Vs. 33 indicates that Jesus only explain to disciples as much as they can understand. This indicates the closeness to Jesus determines how much we can understand God's word.

⁶ Jesus in this parable gives a different perspective of kingdom of God in terms of the growth in size.

⁷ Jesus does not rebuking the disciples because of their fear of the situation, but their fear even with Jesus on the boat.