

Introduction

Today, we come to the conclusion of the series on Spiritual Soaring. So far, we have looked at the **S**, **O** and **A** in **SOAR**—**S**elf-feeding, **O**bedient to the Spirit, and **A**ware of opportunities for ministry.

By way of review, we have said that SOARing takes the waddle out of your walk and describes a life that gives God's strength and power to the weak and powerless. SOAR is an acronym that stands for:

Self-Feeding. SOARing followers of Jesus take responsibility for their own spiritual understanding, character development and growth.

Obedient to the Spirit. SOARing followers of Jesus are obedient to God's Holy Spirit who resides within them.

Alert for Opportunities. SOARing followers of Jesus develop Alert the character that is always alert to opportunities for ministry. They take the initiative to share their lives, gifts, understanding in compassionate and Christlike ways.

Reproducing followers. SOARing followers of Jesus reproduce spiritually by making disciples of all people groups, including their own, passing on to new believers all that they know about following Jesus.

We have said that this is the kind of person God wants His followers to be: self-feeders, who are obedient to the Spirit, alert for opportunities, and reproduce spiritually.

Reproducing Followers

Today, we will focus on reproducing followers of Jesus Christ. As we begin, I want us to look at a video clip testimony about a person who understood what God wanted and committed himself to it. I first heard this story from Dr. Roy Fish at Southwestern Seminary. It started many years ago in a Baptist church in Bournemouth, England. It has been told and retold and even put on a video clip. It is a story about an old man by the name of Frank Jenner, who committed his life to spiritual reproduction through personal witnessing. Here is the clip. . .

Of course, not everyone is able to witness to ten people per day, and few of us can do it the way Frank Jenner did it. There are, in fact, as many ways to reproduce spiritually as there are followers of Jesus. Some reproduce through one-on-one witnessing. Others by teaching. Still others by ministering to people, or by demonstrating the gospel. We don't have time today to look at all of the different ways of reproducing. But we want to answer the question, "What does God expect of us, as individuals and as a church when it comes to spiritual reproduction?" It turns out that to find the answer, we do not have to go any farther than the teaching of Jesus. Listen to this story from God's Word:

Parable of the Farmer Scattering Seed Mark 4:1–34 (NLT)

Once again Jesus began teaching by the lakeshore. A very large crowd soon gathered

around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat in the boat while all the people remained on the shore. ² He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables, such as this one:

³ "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed. ⁴ As he scattered it across his field, some of the seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it. ⁵ Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and since it didn't have deep roots, it died. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants so they produced no grain. ⁸ Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!" ⁹ Then he said, "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

¹⁰ Later, when Jesus was alone with the twelve disciples and with the others who were gathered around, they asked him what the parables meant.

¹¹ He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secret* of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders, ¹² so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled:

When they see what I do,
they will learn nothing.
When they hear what I say,
they will not understand.
Otherwise, they will turn to me
and be forgiven.*"

¹³ Then Jesus said to them, "If you can't understand the meaning of this parable, how will you understand all the other parables?" ¹⁴ The farmer plants seed by taking God's word to others. ¹⁵ The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away. ¹⁶ The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word. ¹⁸ The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God's word, ¹⁹ but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced. ²⁰ And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

Parable of the Lamp

²¹ Then Jesus asked them, "Would anyone light a lamp and then put it under a basket or under a bed? Of course not! A lamp is placed on a stand, where its light will shine. ²² For everything that is hidden will eventually be brought into the open, and every secret will be brought to light. ²³ Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

²⁴ Then he added, "Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the

more understanding you will be given*—and you will receive even more. ²⁵To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them.”

Parable of the Growing Seed

²⁶ Jesus also said, “The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, while he’s asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. ²⁸ The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. ²⁹ And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come.”

Parable of the Mustard Seed

³⁰ Jesus said, “How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed planted in the ground. It is the smallest of all seeds, ³² but it becomes the largest of all garden plants; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade.”

³³ Jesus used many similar stories and illustrations to teach the people as much as they could understand. ³⁴ In fact, in his public ministry he never taught without using parables; but afterward, when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.

And, that is where the story ends. That is a familiar story to some of you, but I hope that its familiarity does not rob you of its importance.

Questions to Consider

1. What are each of these parables about?
2. In the parable of the sower,
 - a. How many kinds of seed were there?
 - b. How many kinds of soil?
 - c. What was the defining characteristic of the “good” soil?
 - d. Which soil represents you the best?
 - e. What word describes those who fail to understand these parables?
3. In the parable of the lamp, what happens to those who do listen to what Jesus says? To those who do not listen?
4. In the parable of the growing seed, what is the farmer’s responsibility? To understand all of the biology? To make the seed grow? To plant the seed? Water it? Harvest it?
5. From the parable of the Mustard seed, what can we say that God expects from his followers?
6. What will you do to begin reproducing yourself spiritually? When? How? Who?



Spiritual SOARing

Part 4

Forest Meadow Baptist Church

January 22, 2012