

# Let the Bible Be Weird Week 2 Discussion Guide

## “God Did Not Only Speak in Bullet Points”

Matthew 13:10-23

### Leader Setup

This guide is designed for individuals, families, or groups. The goal is not just to talk about parables in general, but to read Matthew 13 closely and practice the second question in our Bible reading framework:

#### What is this text doing?

As you work through the passage, resist the urge to rush straight to application. Let the text set the agenda. Pay attention to what Jesus says, how the disciples respond, and what the parable reveals about the condition of the hearer.

Helpful follow-up prompts:

- “Where do you see that in the text?”
- “What makes you say that?”
- “What do you notice about Jesus’ wording?”
- “How does this connect to the Parable of the Sower?”
- “What is this passage revealing about the hearer?”

## Part 1: Starting with Our Expectations

1. When you think about reading the Bible, do you naturally prefer passages that are clear, direct, and easy to apply? Why or why not?
2. What kinds of biblical passages tend to frustrate or slow you down?
3. Why do you think we often want Scripture to speak in “bullet points”?
4. What is the difference between a passage being unclear and a passage requiring engagement?
5. This week’s Bible reading question is: **What is this text doing?** Why might that be an important question to ask before jumping to application?

## Part 2: Why Parables?

Read Matthew 13:10

6. What question do the disciples ask Jesus in verse 10?
7. Why is their question important?
8. What does their question suggest about parables? Were parables always immediately obvious and easy to understand?
9. Many people say parables are “earthly stories with heavenly meanings.” What is helpful about that definition? What might it miss?
10. What are some ways a story can communicate differently than a direct explanation?
11. Why might Jesus use stories, images, and parables instead of only giving direct statements?
12. What does this teach us about the way Scripture often works?

## Part 3: Secrets of the Kingdom

Read Matthew 13:11-12

13. What does Jesus say has been given to the disciples?
14. What do you think Jesus means by “the secrets of the kingdom of heaven”?
15. How is a “secret” or “mystery” in Scripture different from a puzzle that clever people solve?
16. What does verse 12 suggest about the relationship between receiving truth and being given more understanding?
17. How can someone become more receptive to God’s Word over time?
18. How can someone become less receptive over time?
19. What does this passage suggest about the seriousness of how we listen?

## Part 4: Hearing Without Hearing

Read Matthew 13:13-15

20. What repeated contrast do you notice in these verses?
21. What does it mean to “hear” but not really understand?
22. What does it mean to “see” but not really perceive?
23. Jesus quotes Isaiah 6 here. What kind of people does this quotation describe?
24. Look closely at verse 15. What has happened to the people’s hearts, ears, and eyes?
25. Does Jesus describe their problem as mainly intellectual, moral, spiritual, or some combination?
26. Why is it possible to be around Scripture, hear Scripture, and even know Scripture, but still not truly receive it?
27. How might this happen in church life today?
28. What warning should we hear in this part of the passage?

## Part 5: Blessed Eyes and Ears

Read Matthew 13:16-17

29. What does Jesus say is blessed about the disciples?
30. Why is it significant that they are able to see and hear what many prophets and righteous people longed for?
31. Does this mean the disciples fully understand everything already? How do we know?
32. What is the difference between struggling to understand and refusing to hear?
33. What does the disciples' willingness to come to Jesus with questions teach us?
34. How might bringing our confusion to Jesus be part of faithful Bible reading?

## Part 6: The Seed and the Path

Read Matthew 13:18-19

35. What does Jesus identify as the seed?
36. Why is the phrase "the word of the kingdom" important?
37. What happens to the seed that falls along the path?
38. How does Jesus describe the person represented by the path?
39. What might it look like for a heart to become hard or unreceptive?
40. What are some habits or attitudes that can keep the Word from penetrating deeply?
41. How can we tell the difference between honest confusion and a closed heart?

## Part 7: The Rocky Soil

Read Matthew 13:20-21

42. How does the rocky-soil hearer initially respond to the Word?
43. What is good about that response?
44. What is missing?
45. What happens when trouble or persecution comes because of the Word?
46. Why is "immediate joy" not the same thing as deep-rooted faith?
47. Where have you seen people confuse excitement with maturity?
48. What helps the Word develop deep roots in a person's life?
49. What does this soil teach us about endurance?

## Part 8: The Thorny Soil

Read Matthew 13:22

50. How does Jesus describe the thorny-soil hearer?
51. Does this person reject the Word outright? What makes this warning especially uncomfortable?
52. What does Jesus name as the things that choke the Word?

53. What are “the cares of the world”? What might those look like in ordinary life?
54. What is “the deceitfulness of riches”? What lies can money, comfort, or security tell us?
55. What else can function like thorns in a person’s life?
56. In the message, thorns were described as things that need to be named, pulled, and cleared. What does that image help you understand?
57. Why is “try harder” usually not enough when the Word is being choked?
58. What might it look like to start clearing space for the Word to become fruitful?

## Part 9: The Good Soil

Read Matthew 13:23

59. What three movements do you see in verse 23?
60. Why is hearing not enough by itself?
61. Why is understanding not enough by itself?
62. What does it mean for the Word to bear fruit?
63. What kinds of fruit might Jesus be talking about?
64. Why do you think Jesus mentions different amounts of fruit: hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold?
65. What does this teach us about growth in the kingdom?
66. How does this verse help us understand the goal of Bible reading?

## Part 10: What Is This Text Doing?

67. Step back and look at the whole passage. What is Matthew 13:10-23 doing to the reader?
68. Is it mainly explaining parables, exposing hearers, inviting response, warning disciples, encouraging patience, or something else?
69. How does this passage search the heart?
70. How does it comfort or encourage?
71. How does it confront?
72. How does it help us read other parts of Scripture better?
73. What would we miss if we reduced this passage to a simple lesson like, “Be good soil”?

## Part 11: Practicing the Question with Other Passages

Use one or more of the following passages to practice asking: **What is this text doing?**

### Psalm 13:1-6

74. What is this Psalm doing? Is it teaching facts, giving words for grief, modeling prayer, moving from lament to trust, or something else?
75. How would we flatten this Psalm if we only looked for a quick takeaway?

## **Proverbs 3:5-6**

76. What is this proverb doing? Is it giving wisdom, training trust, warning against self-reliance, or guaranteeing a trouble-free life?
77. What happens if we read Proverbs like mechanical promises instead of wisdom?

## **Revelation 5:5-6**

78. What is this vision doing? What does the Lion/Lamb image reveal about Jesus?
79. How would we flatten the passage if we only tried to decode the symbols instead of letting them reshape our vision of power and victory?

## **Luke 10:30-37**

80. What is the Parable of the Good Samaritan doing? Is it merely saying “be nice,” or is it confronting assumptions about neighbor-love, mercy, and religious boundaries?

# **Part 12: Personal Application**

81. Which soil do you most easily recognize in yourself right now: path, rocky, thorny, or good soil? Why?
82. What helps you become more receptive to the Word?
83. What tends to make your heart harder, shallower, or more crowded?
84. What is one “thorn” that may be choking the Word in your life right now?
85. What would it look like to name that thorn honestly?
86. What would it look like to start pulling it up or clearing space?
87. Where do you need the Word to take deeper root?
88. What is one passage of Scripture you need to return to slowly this week?
89. How can your family, group, or church help you become better soil for the Word?

## **Closing Prayer Prompt**

Close by praying for God to make you receptive hearers of His Word.

Pray specifically:

- for hearts that are soft rather than hard

- for roots that grow deep rather than shallow
- for thorns to be named and cleared
- for Scripture to search and form us
- for the Word of the kingdom to bear fruit in our lives

A possible closing prayer:

Lord Jesus, make us good soil. Give us ears that truly hear, eyes that truly see, and hearts that receive Your Word with humility. Show us what is hard, shallow, or crowded in us. Help us make room for Your Word to take root and bear fruit. Amen.