

SHARING YOUR FAITH, PART 4

“Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.” (Mark 4:5-6, NASB)

LIKE ME, YOU’RE PROBABLY NOT THAT WELL-VERSED in the techniques employed to get a golf course to its greenest. You just know this: You love fairways without flaws and greens that roll true.

In order for that to happen, though, someone—the course superintendent—has to understand agronomy extensively. Otherwise, what we’ll have is a bunch of grass springing up quickly but never taking root. The fairways will go thin and the greens will be patchy.

In Jesus’ Parable of the Sower, where a man goes out with a bag full of seed and scatters it about, looking forward to its growth, there are those seeds that do not survive. Last week, we saw that some seed was lost to the birds—or, in Jesus’ explanation, snatched quickly away by the enemy, who is Satan. Now we see that a second group of seeds leap toward the sunshine but wither quickly because without root, they have no nourishment to defend them from the heat.

Jesus explained that these seeds were those who hear the word of God and “immediately receive it with joy.” They recognize the life in that message we call the Gospel, and it sounds good to them. But they are never established in the faith, perhaps trying to go it alone, with neither a relationship with Christ nor involvement in a fellowship of believers. So when “affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away” (Mark 4:17). And Jesus was clear throughout the teaching of his ministry: Affliction and persecution will come. Try to face these in your own strength, and you’ll become defeated and wither.

What does this mean for our sharing of the faith? For one, it means that a few minutes of Gospel-preaching is only the beginning. We have spoken of building relationship and continuing conversations with those to whom we carry the message of Christ. Evangelism is not a hit-and-run engagement. We must be willing to spend the time that people need to get established. That’s why it is best to minister with a partners or groups; this way you can share the time and energy needed to walk an unbeliever into understanding, into faith, and then toward root-establishing fellowship with God and with other believers.

Opening questions Tell a tale of the worst-conditioned course you’ve ever played. • In what ways have you seen people take healthy root in their faith?

READING Matthew 7:21-23; Hebrews 10:24-25; 2 Timothy 4:1-5

The importance of knowing God (Matthew 7)

What is the grave error of those Jesus speaks of in this passage? How can we avoid such an error ourselves?

Fellowship and support (Hebrews 10)

According to this passage, what is the value of Christian fellowship? How can this kind of support specifically help each of us take root in the faith?

A full-range ministry (2 Timothy 4)

List some of the elements of Timothy’s ministry as laid out by Paul. How do these elements balance each other out in helping others along in the faith? What role do you see yourself having in helping others grow in Christ?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International. You will find an introductory video for this study at <https://youtu.be/zSY0kx3DVTw>.