

**II. Group discussion** *Each number below includes a set of questions that relate to the scripture text. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for "the big question."*

1. Meditate on Luke 8:4-15. Quiet reflection. Select three readers to read the text out loud slowly, with a minute or two of silence between each reading. It works best if the readers use different translations. This exercise invites your group to "live in the text."

What was helpful about reading the text this way?

What did you hear in this scripture?

2. What is the first kind of soil? What happens to seeds that fall here? *The path is packed too hard for seeds to make a dent.*

What kind of heart is reflected by this soil?  
*Steve Flatt used the word calloused.*

In what ways could our hearts be like the pathway soil?  
*Not those people "out there" who refuse God. How could we be resistant to hearing God's word?*

3. What is the second kind of soil? What happens to those seeds?

What kind of heart is represented by the rocky soil? *A casual heart.*

What kind of tests would tempt us to forget God?  
*Pain, grief, intellectual doubt, life frustration, church fights*

How can we put down deeper roots to help us face seasons of drought? What deepens your faith?

4. What is the third kind of soil? What happens to those seeds?

What kind of heart is the thorny ground? *A crowded heart.*

What is the difference between the thorny soil and the rocky soil?  
*The rocks are struggles, while the thorns are good things. Thorns are blessings from God, but they become a problem when we love the gifts more than the giver.*

What good things might you be tempted to love more than God?

5. What is the fourth kind of soil, and what happens there?

What is the spiritual meaning of the good soil?  
*A cultivated heart brings joy to God and to everyone else.*

What are the characteristics of a good heart (v. 15)?  
*Hear the word, retain it, and persevere until the harvest.*

Out of all the virtues Jesus could have used to describe a good heart, why do you think he chose perseverance?  
*If you live long enough, you'll see droughts and wonderful harvests. Faith involves staying fixed on the goal through all the seasons.*

6. What kind of crop does God want to see in our lives?

7. We all believe, so how does this parable apply to us? In what sense does God's word bring new seeds into your life today?

What are some ways we can develop hearts that are good soil for God to grow his seed?

† **The big question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It's okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

As God is sowing seeds in your life, which of the three bad soils would he struggle with the most? Are you more likely to be resistant (ignore), doubtful (consumed with troubles), or distracted (busy doing something else)?

What are you doing to cultivate your heart to receive the word of God?

### III. Other resources

**The point** – Cultivate a heart that seeks to hear God’s word for how you can be more faithful this week.

#### **Prayer ideas**

Thank God for the seeds of faith he has planted.  
Invite God to plant new seeds that will grow in our lives.  
Pray for two people: a person who needs to hear the word of God and a person who would enjoy being part of our group.

Ask God to guide our congregation through the process of discerning whom he has prepared to preach at College Hills.

**Kid-friendly activity.** *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

Grab a pack of flower bulbs from a garden store. Daffodils would be great.

Give each kid a bulb and hand shovel (get parents to bring them or put the kids in teams).

Send the kids out to plant the bulbs in an assigned area (coordinate with your host).

Read Luke 8:4-8 aloud.  
What are the four kinds of soil? Where are some places like that in this yard? Driveway, rocky soil, under dense foliage, etc.

What is the meaning of this parable?  
Read Luke 8:11-15 aloud.

What are the four kinds of soil? Which is more like you?  
Resistant (ignore God)  
Doubtful (consumed with troubles)  
Distracted (busy doing something else)

How can we become the kind of soil where God’s word will thrive?

## **LIFE Group Guide**

### **Luke 8 – a Cultivated Heart**

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

The theme: **Developing a heart that is open to the word of God.**

Sunday’s sermon deals with the parable of the soils, so it focuses on developing the kind of heart that is open to the word of God. Whether you are a non-Christian or a long-term believer, this parable offers an important message. God is always working to draw us closer to himself, and each day’s decisions make us more or less ready to work with his plans for our lives.

This guide suggests a meditative reading of the text since the theme is receiving God’s word. That may be unusual for your group, but sometimes a change brings a fresh hearing.

Leadership tip: Look for ways to make everyone a participant. When you give someone a job in the group, they feel more valued and appreciated and your load is lighter. Roles to consider: co-leader, apprentice leader, snack coordinator, childcare coordinator, prayer journal manager, e-mail encourager, bouncer, etc.

**I. Relate** *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone’s spiritual pulse, and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ The worst thing about my feet is...  
*I know – another extremely goofy question. But you’ll be amazed how well it works! Go around the circle & ask everyone to respond.*
- ❖ If your entire schedule for the week was cancelled, what would you do with the free time?
- ❖ What is something you remember about being 12 years old?