

## ***How do I respond to God?***

You can tell a lot about what type of person you are by the way you respond to God. Church attendance, giving time or money will tell you some things, but these (and a number of other things that can be superficial qualifications for being a “good Christian”) are merely external. If you were to strip away all of your activities, what would be left? At your core, your heart of hearts, what do you think about God? How do you respond to Him?

Jesus told the parable of the sower to illustrate that people respond to God in different ways. If we truly believe that God’s love for us is overwhelming and relentless, then our response to this type of love is to give ourselves completely to Him. Right? Sadly, we all know that this isn’t the case. In the parable of the sower, some do respond to the seed of God’s Word in loving and complete obedience. But some hear and reject God’s truth. Others seem to be growing and following for a while, but as soon as things get difficult they give up. Still others follow excitedly at first, then get caught up in the cares of the world and the pull of possessions and choose a different course.

The parable of the sower provides a perfect opportunity for us to pause and answer the question: How do I respond to God? What type of soil am I right now? I encourage you to take a few minutes to read this parable in Luke 8:4-15. Try to appreciate the force of Jesus’ words. Read it honestly, trying to see where you fit in the parable. Then answer this question.

*Which type of soil do you think best describes me? Why?*

I think that most people would like to think that God doesn’t expect too much from them. I’d say that most Christians live as though God wants minimal commitment from them and that He is absolutely thrilled when we go above and beyond. As comforting as that may be, I simply cannot find any hint of that in Scripture.

What I see is God warning us again and again of the dangers of being lukewarm (Revelation 3:14-17 and the entire book of First John). In Malachi 1:6-14, God takes the notion that half-hearted worship is better than no worship at all and blows it completely out of the water.

He calls us to let go of everything to trust and follow Him. He’s clear about our calling in Matthew 16:24-25. For years, I read this passage and think through reasons why Jesus couldn’t be saying what He seemed to be saying. I’m learning to fight that thought and to let Christ speak for Himself. Try reading these verses and take them at face value. Then, answer these questions.

*What do you think Jesus meant when He said “Take up your cross and follow Me”?*

*Being as practical as possible, how would taking up your cross and following Christ look like in your life now?*