

The Wheat and Tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 37-43)

A Small Group Outline



1. Praise (Purpose: To worship God)

- What are you thankful for this week? (let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)
- Song Service
 - Sing a few songs of praise to God

2. Pray (Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)

- What challenges did you have this week? (write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)
- Go into a season of prayer

3. Review (Purpose: To learn accountability)

- Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? (e.g. Who did you share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?)
- Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.

4. Give (Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)

- This is the time to return tithes and offerings. If done electronically, kindly ensure that you get the bank account details of your local church from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.

5. Discover (Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)

• Notes for the facilitator

- Read *Christ's Object Lessons (COL)*, pp. 70-75
- **"The field,' Christ said, 'is the world.' But we must understand this as signifying the church of Christ in the world.** The parable is a description of that which pertains to the kingdom of God, His work of salvation of men; and this work is accomplished through the church. True, the Holy Spirit has gone out into all the world; everywhere it is moving upon the hearts of men; but it is in the church that we are to grow and ripen for the garner of God" (COL 70).
- Vs 25: While men slept his enemy came - Satan cannot be seen. His work is silent but the effects of his work can be seen.
- "The good seed represents those who are born of the word of God, the truth. The tares represent a class who are the fruit or embodiment of error, of false principles. [The tares] are always sown by Satan, the enemy of God and man" (COL 70)
- "In the East, men sometimes took revenge upon an enemy by strewing his newly sown fields with the seeds of some noxious weed that, while growing, closely resembled wheat. Springing up with the wheat, it injured the crop and brought trouble and loss to the owner of the field. So it is from enmity to Christ that Satan scatters his evil seed among the good grain of the kingdom. **The fruit of his sowing he attributes to the Son of God.** By bringing into the church those who bear Christ's name while they deny His character, the wicked one causes that God shall be dishonored, the work of salvation misrepresented, and souls imperiled" (COL 71).
- Vs 28: Christ's servants have often tried to purify the church by removing false believers. But Christ warns against this. Any attempt to gather the weeds would only endanger the wheat, because the roots of the weeds would be intertwined with those of the wheat.

- “Christ has plainly taught that those who persist in open sin must be separated from the church [cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-5], but **He has not committed to us the work of judging character and motive.** He knows our nature too well to entrust this work to us. Should we try to uproot from the church those whom we suppose to be spurious Christians, we should be sure to make mistakes. Often we regard as hopeless subjects the very ones whom Christ is drawing to Himself. Were we to deal with these souls according to our imperfect judgment, it would perhaps extinguish their last hope. Many who think themselves Christians will at last be found wanting. **Many will be in heaven who their neighbors supposed would never enter there.** Man judges from appearance, but God judges the heart” (COL 71)
- Sometimes the church has tried to uproot the tares, by getting the civil power involved. As a result, people who have differed from its doctrines have been imprisoned, tortured, and put to death. But this method is not endorsed by Christ; it is Satan’s way of bringing people under his control (cf. COL 74)
- “Not all that is sown in the field is good grain. The fact that men are in the church does not prove them Christians” (COL 74)
- “The **tares closely resembled the wheat while the blades were green; but when the field was white for the harvest, the worthless weeds bore no likeness to the wheat....** Sinners who make a pretension of piety mingle for a time with the true followers of Christ, and the semblance of Christianity is calculated to deceive many; but in the harvest of the world there will be no likeness between good and evil. Then those who **have joined the church, but who have not joined Christ,** will be manifest” (COL 74)
- “Apparently Christ saw no danger to the wheat [by permitting the wheat and tares to grow together until the end]. Human wisdom would perhaps have excluded Judas from the inner circle of Christ’s disciples, the Twelve, for fear that his influence would prevent the others from measuring up to Christ’s goal for them. But nothing in the Gospel record implies that his influence over them was more than temporary; in no instance was it decisive” (*SDA Bible Commentary*).
- Some examples of Satan sowing evil and then blaming God for it:
 - Natural disasters (sometimes called ‘acts of God’)
 - Death of loved ones
 - Disease
 - Misfortune
- Why leave the tares to grow till the harvest?
 - It teaches us God’s patience and love toward sinners. He gives them time to repent and be saved.
 - Humans are not good judges of motives and character. They may uproot the wrong plants.
 - The removal of false believers often causes others in the church to also stumble and lose their way.
 - The false believers will become FULLY unmasked by then.
- Warnings in this parable
 - Don’t try and weed out the tares prematurely
 - A final judgement is surely coming, when true character will be revealed
 - There is no second chance. Once the tares are bundled at the harvest, they will be completely burned.
- *Read Matt. 13:24-30, 37-43. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*

- **Discussion Questions** (*use only a few*). *The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
 - In what ways has Satan tried to mess up God’s plan for His field?
 - In which ways can false believers disguise themselves as genuine ones?
 - Isn’t it harmful to allow tares to grow in the church, lest their negative influence destroy the wheat? Elaborate.
 - According to this parable, the enemy sows at night, while people are sleeping. What does that tell us about how Satan operates? Give some examples of this? (*ask one question at a time*)
 - Satan scatters bad seed and then blames God for the evil. Give a few examples of how he often does so?
 - What are some reasons it is not safe to remove tares from the church?
 - Does the parable teach that the church cannot reprove or discipline its members for immoral behaviour, and only wait till for the harvest (Second Coming) for them to be punished? Why or why not?
 - What is the difference between wheat seed and ‘tare’ seed?
 - In a spiritual sense, do you think that wheat can become tares, or tares wheat? Explain?
 - What do you think are some of the warnings of this parable?
- **Application Questions** (*select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT*)
 - Have you ever thought of trying, or actually tried, to uproot tares in God’s church? Share your experience without identifying people.
 - How can you co-exist with people in the church who are not necessarily on God’s side?
 - Have you ever blamed God for disaster that has come to you? Elaborate.
 - How can you sow good seeds (seeds of truth, hope, kindness, love) in the world this week?
 - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group’s secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. “I will endeavour to deal patiently with difficult people in the church, and try to show them the same forbearance that God has shown me.”

6. Share (*Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith*)

- Do you have anyone you could share today’s lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

7. Closing prayer

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