



What type of person are you?

I don't know if you have applied for a job recently, but many companies put you through a 'personality profile' test to see if you would be the right kind of person for the job. They want you to answer over 100 questions to try and find out if you are an extrovert or an introvert, a person who works better by having all the facts and figures or one who works better by intuition or 'gut feeling', and if you prefer making decisions based on logic or rather on how you feel.

I've been through such a test, and I can tell you, it's a painstaking ordeal!

I find it very interesting that in the Bible, Jesus also classifies people into certain categories. These categories are not to see if you will be fit for a certain job, but more fundamentally, to determine the quality of life you will have now and for eternity!

Listen to this story of Jesus in which He categorizes people into four types:

' "Listen! Once there was a man who went out to sow grain. As he scattered the seed in the field, some of it fell on the road, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seeds fell on thin, rocky ground and quickly started growing because the soil wasn't very deep. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched and dried up, because the

roots had not grown deep enough. Some of the seeds fell among thorn bushes, which grew up and choked the plants, and they didn't produce any grain. But some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants grew and produced thirty or sixty or even a hundred times as much as was scattered." And Jesus concluded, "If you have ears, pay attention!" "

What does this story mean? Well, thankfully Jesus also gave the explanation. Listen to what He said:



"The seed is God's commands and instructions to us for how to live well. Some people are like the seeds that fall along the path; as soon as they hear the message, Satan comes and takes it away. Other people are like the seeds that fall on rocky ground. As soon as they hear the message, they receive it gladly. But it does not sink deep into them, and they don't last long. So when trouble or persecution comes because of the message, they give up at once. Other people are like the seeds sown among the thorn bushes. These are the ones who hear the message, but the worries about

this life, the love for riches, and all other kinds of desires crowd in and choke the message, and they don't bear fruit. But other people are like seeds sown in good soil. They hear the message, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirty, some sixty, and some one hundred."²

So we see that Jesus categorizes people into one of four types of 'soil': hard soil, rocky & thin soil (no depth), soil choked with weeds, and good soil.

In my job as chaplain, I have certainly encountered people of all four types! But the question I have asked is: "How did each person 'become' the different type of soil, and can they be changed into good soil?" You see, because God's message is so good, and I know it produces the best type of lifestyle, I want everyone to be able to be 'good soil' so that they can experience all of God's blessings for them!

Here is what I have come up with:

1. Hard soil. In the story Jesus told, the hard soil is the road, that is, the ground which people walk on. And so often it is the case in our world that the people who have been 'walked all over' are the people who are 'hard'. People who have been abused physically, emotionally, and sexually; people who have been made fun of since they were young. THIS IS EVIL, and we must protect our youth from being abused in this fashion.

To be healed, such a person first needs to have people stopped from walking all over them. They need to be separated from the abusive situation.

But secondly, to become good soil again, the ground needs to be ploughed up; jackhammers need to be brought in. Unfortunately, there is no

other way. Big cracks will need to appear in the person's life, and these cracks represent pain, anguish, sadness, crying. Why? Not only because of the realization of what has been done to them in the past, but also because of what they themselves have done to cope. You see, a 'hard person' will often do anything to try and resist the pain of being trodden upon, and in so doing often does things that are immoral and destructive to their own selves. But God is holy³. Our God of love who wants them healed needs the person to forsake those destructive and offensive lifestyle patterns⁴. God says "My word is like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces"⁵. When you realize that your actions are worthy of hell, then you can truly change your ways. The Bible says "The sadness that is used by God brings a change of heart that leads to salvation - and there is no regret in that!"⁶

From my own experience, changing hard soil into good soil is possible, but involves a lot of pain! It involves as much pain as a woman going through childbirth! How much better it would be if people never got so hard! We as a society, we as individuals and parents, MUST become diligent to protect our children from abuse. We MUST be firm against those who are doing the abuse, whether it is other kids or grown ups or the devil. Let us stand up for what is right!

2. Thin soil - no depth. Jesus described this soil as 'rocky soil'. But how did the rocks get there? The answer I believe is that the rocks are naturally there! When you go to some place in the countryside, unless the ground has been tended to and ploughed, most soil has a lot of rocks in it!

The same it is with our lives. Each one of us is 'thin soil' on rocks and just naturally like to take the easy route through life. We are naturally not willing to persevere and go it tough. We want to take the path of 'least resistance', just like a river. The problem is, just like the river, a life left to itself turns out crooked, and we don't need more crooks in society!

The Bible says "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him."⁷ If people as adults have 'rocks in their lives', and they are 'thin soil', they have most likely lacked loving discipline. The Bible says "The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother."⁸ Yes, correction may hurt (often the parent more than the child), but the Bible again commands "Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death."⁹

DON'T NEGLECT YOUR CHILDREN! We need loving, strong parenting. We need discipline. Without it, well, just look around and see and hear the results in our own society.

3. Polluted soil - choked with weeds. A garden full of weeds is a garden neglected. Guarding a life against weeds is the responsibility of both parents AND children. Parents need to talk with children to find out what they are learning at school and from friends, and to filter out and remove the rubbish! Parents also need to lay down standards for what should be watched on TV and listened to on the radio, AND explain to their children why or why not. The Bible says "Train a child in the way he should

go, and when he is old he will not depart from it"¹⁰. Remember, there are two ways to get rid of weeds: pull them out while they are still young shoots, or better still if possible, STOP the seeds from being planted in the first place! Knowledge of wisdom and God's truth is primary in this battle!

My friend, there is so much sexy, violent, greedy, and false teaching (eg Evolution which says we come from apes) on the media that we must be vigilant and provide other healthy entertainment options for our youth AND ourselves. We must teach and model the truth so that our children are able to say 'NO' to evil. As it says in the Bible "Insight and understanding will protect you and prevent you from doing the wrong thing. They will keep you away from people who stir up trouble ... and you will be able to resist any immoral person who tries to seduce you with smooth talk".¹¹

And for us as adults? Remember how Jesus described the weeds: "the worries about this life, love for riches, desires for other things". We must guard our hearts from desiring the things of this world more than we desire God! Jesus said "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed!"¹² The Bible says "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."¹³

We have a responsibility to exercise self-discipline (a thinking person can never blame someone else for their own choices) and also to protect the innocent and vulnerable from the prey of others, especially Hollywood and Australian media moguls.

Remember, pulling out fully grown weeds ALWAYS causes lots of

(7) Proverbs 22:15. (8) Proverbs 29:15. (9) Proverbs 23:13,14. (10) Proverbs 22:6. (11) Proverbs 2:11-16. (12) Luke 12:15. (13) Proverbs 4:23.

damage to the garden, and is also hard work.

4. Good soil - fruitful. This is the soil that has had a lot of hard work gone into it. It has had its hard lumps broken up by picks and shovels. It has been ploughed again and again to remove the rocks. It has been guarded against foreign seeds from entering and weeds growing. It is ready to help the good seed grow.

God wants our lives to be like this. Our lives need to be broken into pieces by God's word. Our lives need to be disciplined by God's word. Our lives need to be guarded by God's word. Our lives need to be sown with God's word. And then we will be fruitful, and have the type of life we were always destined for!

Can you see how important God and His word is for us? It doesn't surprise me that I am a chaplain and that my life revolves totally around God and the Bible, because **THERE IS NO OTHER WAY FOR ME TO HELP PEOPLE BE HAPPY AND LIVE WONDERFUL LIVES!**

What type of soil are you? Are you willing to go through the process of change to become good soil? Are you as a parent or adult willing to begin to stand up for what is right so that our children and youth will not have to go through trauma to become good soil?

May God bless your decision.

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You're invited to our next
CELEBRATION
SUNDAY
a Christian Worship
Service
for the whole community!

- **Sunday July 20th**
(the 3rd Sunday of the month)
- **5pm - 6.15pm**
(followed by supper!)
- **Preston Nth East**
Primary School Hall

Come and hear the

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Freedom

South American music group
Bring your whole family!