

# EVALUATION

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Elements of Healthy Soil: Luke 13:6-9

February 27, 2022

*Then [Jesus] told this parable: A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, "For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?" "Sir," the man replied, "leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down."*

Luke 13:6-9

*O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.*

Psalm 139:1

## Some ideas for reading parables

1. Parables are not allegories – focus on the main point
2. The ending matters – pay special attention to the tension at the conclusion
3. Parables often explain themselves – context matters

How the tree will be evaluated: \_\_\_\_\_

## The blessing being known where privacy is a human right

<sup>23</sup> *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

<sup>24</sup> *See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Psalm 139

“Know God. Know yourself. Know yourself to know your need of God. Know God to know you are not gods.” That’s what Calvin means.

Kevin DeYoung’s summary of John Calvin’s teaching on self-knowledge

1. This search for knowing begins with \_\_\_\_\_
2. Rather than being threatening, being known by God is liberating – a reminder of sovereign grace!

## The “how” of how we evaluate the soil of our hearts

Centrality of the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16)

Life transforming walk with Jesus (John 3:3, 30; Phil. 1:6)

Intentional evangelism (Matthew 28:18-20)

Transforming communities through active compassion, mercy, and justice ministries (Micah 6:8)

Global perspective and engagement (Acts 1:8)

Compelling Christian community (Acts 2:42-47)

Heartfelt worship (Psalm 138:1a; John 4:23)

Sacrificial and generous living and giving (Romans 12:1-8)

Culture of godly leadership (Hebrews 13:7)

Fruitful Organizational Structures (Acts 6:1-7; Exodus 18:13-26)

1. The “vineyard worker” starts with studying healthy soils
2. Remember the “Bucket Principle”
3. But just as important, these markers are how we amend the soil



## Deep and soft (with thanks to Earl Palmer)

### 1. Listening to the Holy Spirit

*“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:*

*These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: <sup>2</sup> I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. <sup>3</sup> You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.*

*<sup>4</sup> Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. <sup>5</sup> Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. <sup>6</sup> But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

*<sup>7</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*

Revelation 2:1-7

### 2. You’ve got a friend

*<sup>6</sup> Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.*

Proverbs 27

*<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

Colossians 3

### 3. Fruit is itself part of the grace!

*<sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.*

John 15

I tell you that God will forgive you, but you will never forgive yourselves for having stood out and resisted so long. Oh! may eternal mercy, which has not yet said, “Cut it down,” now dig about you, and dung you that you may bring forth fruit, and then it shall be all to the praise of Him whose precious blood has saved us from eternal wrath.

Charles Spurgeon, from the end of his “Judgment Threatening but Mercy Springing” sermon

## Resources for studying Luke 13

*Bible.org* has some wonderful resources at <https://bible.org/book/Luke>

I. Howard Marshall's Greek commentary is the text is very helpful (Paternoster Press, 1978)

Bob Deffinbaugh's sermon on this text is at <https://bible.org/seriespage/problem-perspective-luke-131-21>

I appreciate J.C. Ryle's commentary on Luke 13 at <https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/l13.htm>

Spurgeon has a classic sermon on this text at [https://www.spurgeongems.org > chs650](https://www.spurgeongems.org/chs650)

The ECC's Vitality material at <https://covchurch.org/vitality/healthy-missional-markers/> has a helpful description of the

*Metrics that Matter: How to measure a healthy missional church*

It is hard to measure spirituality. Some say it is even unwise to do so. Yet when we look at the New Testament, the disciples are coaching churches forward. They are using a frame of reference of what a vital congregation looks like.

Jesus himself is speaking to the churches in Revelation (chapters 2 and 3) about their own strengths and weaknesses. One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to guide churches into telling the truth about themselves, not just telling the truth about Jesus. In the Bible, evaluation is normal and natural.

Although there is no perfect list that describes a healthy missional church, we in the Covenant are using the ten healthy missional markers. By "healthy" we mean *pursuing Christ*. By "missional" we mean *pursuing Christ's priorities in the world*. It is our fervent prayer that every Covenant church becomes a healthy missional church. These markers help us to listen to the Holy Spirit...so that our ears are open to what Jesus is saying to each church.

For help in reading parables, I liked these short articles:

<https://unlockingthebible.org/2013/07/10-tips-for-understanding-jesus-parables/>

<https://www.ligonier.org/posts/interpreting-parables-of-jesus>

<https://www.olivetree.com/blog/how-to-read-a-parable/>

Earl Palmer's *Laughter In Heaven* (Word, 1987) is a wonderful place to start with the parables.

The "Bucket Principle" comes out of the Natural Church Development program. You can read an overview at [http://www.ncd-international.org/public/natural\\_church\\_development.html](http://www.ncd-international.org/public/natural_church_development.html)

Kevin DeYoung has a good summary of Calvin's famous statement on knowing and being known at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/a-calvin-clarification/>