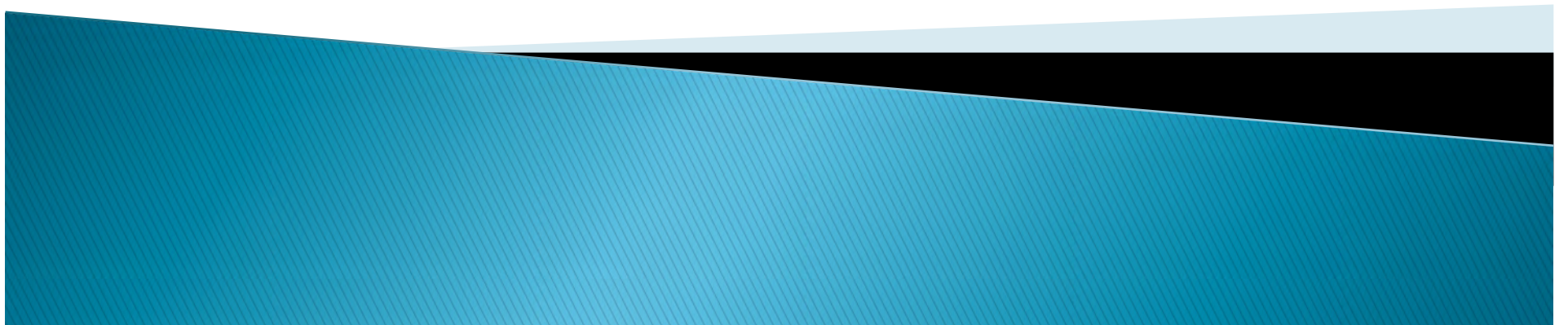
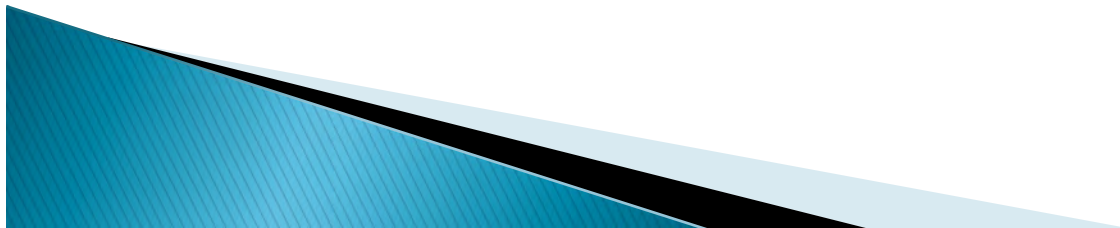


***MIND YOUR ENVIRONMENT***  
**Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23**

**Woodland Park Church of Christ**  
**28 May 2023**



Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: “Behold, a sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, **some seed fell by the wayside**; and the birds came and devoured them. <sup>5</sup> **Some fell on stony places**, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. <sup>7</sup> And **some fell among thorns**, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> **But others fell on good ground** and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”



<sup>18</sup> “Therefore hear the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. <sup>20</sup> But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. <sup>22</sup> Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

**Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23**



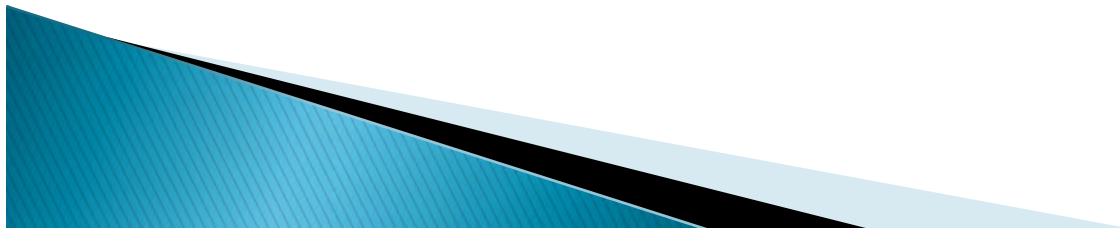
# BACKDROP

- ▶ Scripture often used when teaching the Word.
- ▶ Effectiveness of the message on the hearer.
- ▶ God's word has to be planted in a good environment in order for it to germinate, take root, and produce good fruit.
- ▶ The heart must first be receptive to God's word.  
**See James 1:21**
- ▶ Understand the word; if not, be like the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 (be coachable/teachable).
- ▶ Foster the proper environment for the Word to take root – sufficient soil, nurture, removal of harmful impediments to growth **(NC Class)**



## EXTENDING THE BREADTH AND PRACTICALITY OF THE MESSAGE

- ▶ Must be noted that all the seed sown had the same fruit-producing quality, potential, and capability.
- ▶ Simply, there was nothing wrong with any of the seed.
- ▶ So, what was the difference?
- ▶ **Environment** → surroundings and/or conditions the seeds were subjected to



- ▶ The seed reached maturity only in the proper environment.
  - Nurturing → ample soil full of nitrogen and other nutrients, adequate water.
  - Free of toxins, pollutants and contaminants – anything that would kill, harm, or impede (stunt) the growth and development of the seedlings
  - Our children – invariably, their trajectory is determined by who and what surrounds them

**To boost seeds' produce, farmers –**

- Nourish the soil
- Water and feed the plants
- Monitor and manage pests and disease
- Pull the weeds

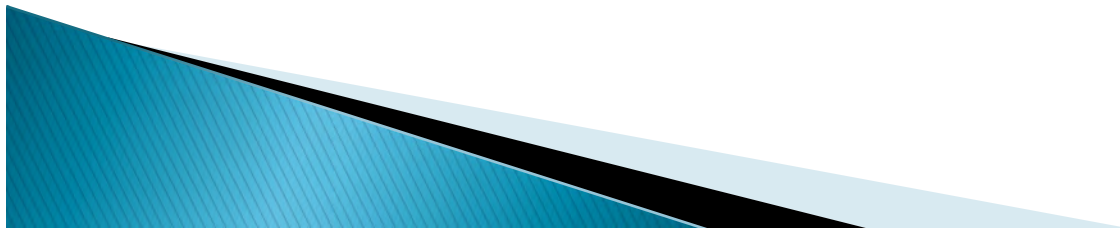


We too can grow and develop fully only when our environments are whole and healthy.

- Removing distractions and other things that divert our focus and attention and choke/strangle us.
- Steering clear of evil influences.
- Avoiding corrupting, toxic forces.
- ▶ Must be cognizant of those in our space, the music we listen to, the messages and images we dwell on, or anything we allow to enter our heart and space (environment) – **true, noble, just, pure, lovely, good report** (see **Philippians 4:8**).
- **Example** → college study group moving on from persons who were not interested in learning.



- ▶ We all need to remove anyone or anything from our environment that prevent us from being what God would have us be and impede us from maximizing potential.
  - Positive Impact, not negative force
  - Encouraging, not discouraging
  - Optimism, not pessimism
  - Engendering Faith, not causing fear
  - Instilling Confidence, not rousing doubt





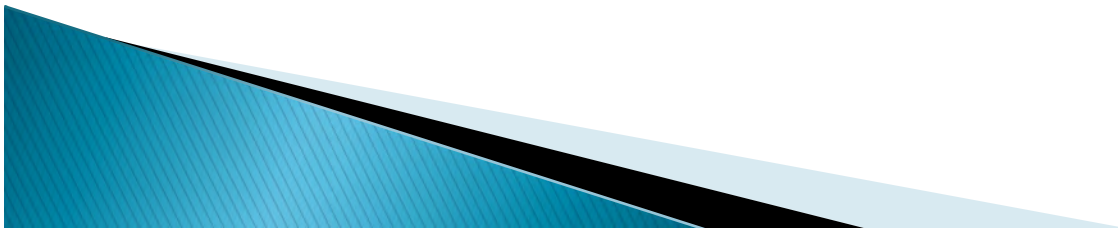
But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *who were* among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; <sup>7</sup> and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: “The land we passed through to spy out *is* an exceedingly good land. <sup>8</sup> If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, ‘a land which flows with milk and honey.’ <sup>9</sup> Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they *are* our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us. Do not fear them.”

<sup>10</sup> And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. **Numbers 14:6-10**



We would be much better off if we cleared our environment of the things and people that hold you back and keep you down.

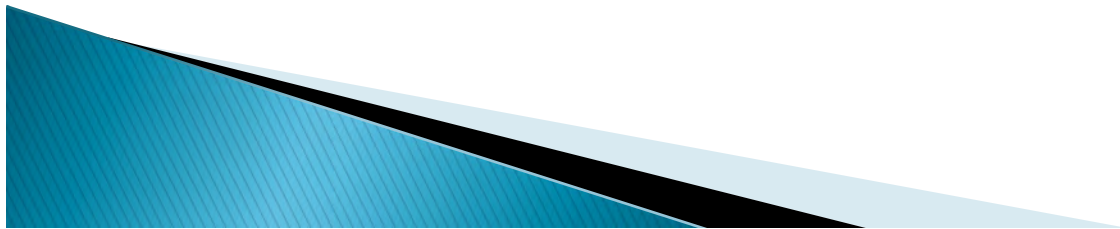
He who walks [as a companion] with wise men will be wise, but the companions of [conceited, dull-witted] fools [are fools themselves and] will experience harm. **Proverbs 13:20 [AMP]**



We need to be circumspect about who we allow to come into our “inner circle” -- > Those with sway, influence, and impact.

The man of *too many* friends [chosen indiscriminately] will be broken in pieces *and* come to ruin, but there is a [true, loving] friend who [is reliable and] sticks closer than a brother. **Proverbs 18:24 [AMP]**

**Everybody Your Kin Is not Your Kind!**



At times there are those in our environment who are only there for what they can get.

Those with self-serving motives who knowingly watch you fall and slide into immorality and despair and won't say a word to try and steer you away from disaster because they are gaining some "benefit" or pleasure!!

Better is an open reprimand [of loving correction] than love that is hidden. <sup>6</sup> Faithful are the wounds of a friend [who corrects out of love and concern], but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful [because they serve his hidden agenda]. **Proverbs 27:6 [AMP]**.

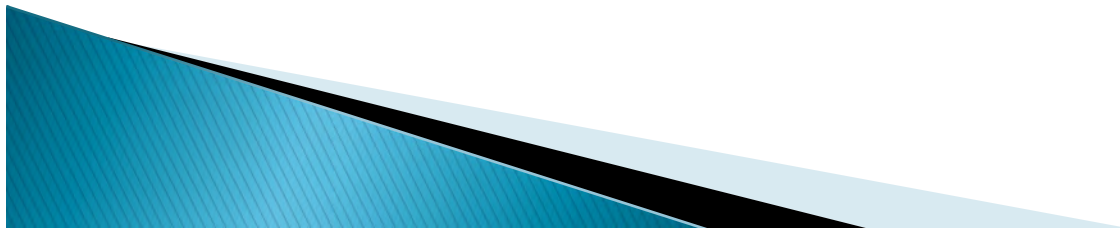


Many overestimate their strength in thinking they can divorce themselves from their environment.  
“That’s them, that’s not me!”

They believe they have “control” and have matters well in-hand. **Be careful →**

Can a man take fire to his chest and his clothes not be burned? <sup>28</sup> Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? **Proverbs 6:27-28**

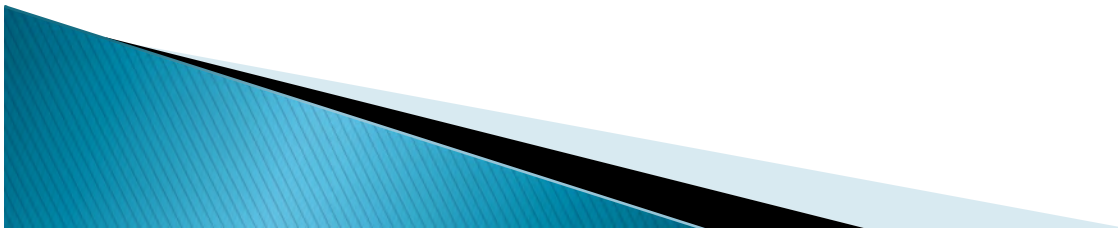
Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. **I Corinthians 10:12**



# In our great nation, we have an Environmental Protection Agency

- ▶ To protect the people and the environment from significant health risks (air and water cleanliness);
- ▶ To sponsor and conduct research → Diligently endeavoring to determine the impact of particulates and other matters in the environment on health and safety;
- ▶ To develop and enforce environmental regulations.

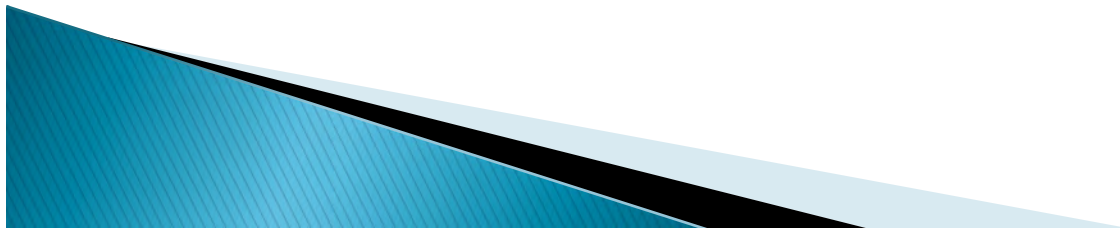
For us to remain healthy, whole, spiritually fit, we must have a similar structure within us.



**VIGOROUSLY AND ZEALOUSLY  
MIND YOUR ENVIRONMENT;**

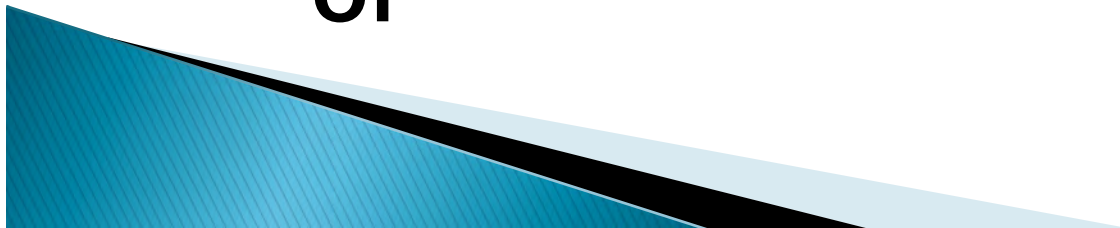
**REMOVE ANYTHING & ANYONE  
NOT PROMOTING YOUR WELL-  
BEING;**

**IT COULD VERY WELL MEAN THE  
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND  
DEATH!**



# Lord's Invitation Extended to All

- ▶ **Be added to the Lord's body**  
Hear the gospel (Acts 15:7);  
Believe the gospel (Acts 8:37, 15:7);  
Repent of sins (Acts 2:38);  
Confess Christ (Acts 8:37);  
Be baptized for the remission of sin (Acts 2:38);  
or





## Lord's Invitation (cont'd)

- ▶ Be reconciled unto the Lord (1 John 1:8–9); or
- ▶ Desire prayer (James 5:16).

