



Jesus' teachings as understood & interpreted from a 21st century rural perspective

This represents a series of materials that can be used for devotional studies, discussions, or sermon background. It brings a 21st century perspective that helps to make relevant Jesus' original parable teaching. It gives an understanding of the rural material from the perspective of the rural people of our time in Australia. There are a lot of spiritual parallels in farming and nature that any rural person would understand see or appreciate.

The first in this series is related to Jesus' teaching about cropping by Ross Neville who has been farming in NSW for 45 years. Ross grew up farming with multiple cultivation practices to eliminate weeds then the use of chemicals and new breeds of wheat revolutionised farm practice. This over the last 20 years has been revolutionised again with minimum tillage improved breeds and companion planting. The machines used have over this period changed significantly in size and technical expertise. Ross sees and believes God still teaches through the normal life situation. This material contains some new/old ideas about what a seed of wheat can today teach us about the Christian formation process.

There are 10 short story explanations listed below under the heading Cropping - Discipleship. You are invited to understand and think through what does this understanding of the bible passages imply about church or Christian life.

Cropping – Discipleship # 1 - #10



Jesus drew parallels between a seed of wheat and a person's transformation from being a physical person to a spiritual person

How are people like kernels of wheat? The resurrection body 1Cor 15:35—50

- ⇒ What is a seed?
- ⇒ How does it grow?

We do know more about how today than in Jesus' time and that gives us some interesting perspectives to the transformation that occurs as we become Christians!

Why did Jesus use the grain of wheat as a parallel to people?

When you sow you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable. What you sow does not come to life until it dies.

#7- #10 The Sower & the Soils Matt13: 3-8 Mark 4:3-8 Luke 8:5-8 are a series that looks at soil types

When people hear the message of the kingdom..... it is like a sower who places the seed...Jesus emphasised the impact of 4 different soil properties affecting the gospel message growth in people lives.

The soil types are meaningful to growers and Christians

Cropping – Discipleship

#1 The kingdom of God is like a Seed of wheat Matt: 13

'The seed sprouts and grows, though he (man) does not know how' Mark 4:27

Jesus drew parallels between a seed of wheat and a person's transformation from being a physical person to a spiritual person

#2 'Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains only a single seed.' 1 Cor 15:37

To grow or germinate, the seed has to be transformed. How does it do this?

#3 All by itself the soil produces grain,, Mark 4:27

Soil or the environment around the seed is critical because the seed by itself cannot change.

#4 All by itself the soil produces grain, *First the stalk, ...Mark 4:28*

Some ideas about how we know a wheat seed multiplies and develops, can help us understand how our faith and witness is shaped.

5 All by itself the soil produces grain, First the stalk, *then the head, then the full kernel in the head. Mark 4:28*

A Christian begins to live in the kingdom of God and can grow and bring others into the kingdom

6 Good seed produces a crop, a hundred, sixty or thirty fold what was sown Matt 13:8 & 23

Jesus expects every Christian to go and tell others the good news about the kingdom this multiplication of our own joining the kingdom is like the multiplication of the wheat seed and we have similar inhibitors.

#7 The first type of soil mentioned are:....hard soils**.....(a compacted path) these people don't understand and quickly leave the faith..... Matt13:5ff**

What are some practices in the church that Jesus indicated creates a hardness of heart that impedes spiritual growth?

8 The second type of soil is **Not deep..... (rocky or shallow usually deficient)**

These people last a short time but have no roots, no moisture, and can't survive trouble & persecution..... Matt13:5

Shallow or hard pans in the soil stunt or stop crop growth and we can see how farm practices and church practises may have to change to prevent this happening

9The third type of soil Jesus talked about was:

soil **full of weed seeds... people who allow worries, wealth, pleasures, desire for things to compete for and choke spiritual development priorities...**

Weeds are one of the biggest problems most crop growers face. Christians in society today have a tremendous amount of competition for the Christian message to take hold in a persons life.

#10 The fourth type of soil Jesus talked about was:

.....good soil**.....people who hear understand and produce disciples...**

Just as the soil requires a team effort of many components and elements there is a need for a team effort to grow and yield as a christian. Ephesians 4:17--5:2

#1 The kingdom of God is like a Seed of wheat Matt: 13 Mark 4:26- 27



'The seed sprouts and grows, though he (man) does not know how' Mark 4:27

'What you sow does not come to life unless it dies' 1Cor 15:37



Jesus drew parallels between a seed of wheat and a person's transformation from being a physical person to a spiritual person

We know that wheat is a kernel that contains both Protein and Starch. Wheat growers in parts of the state are able to grow different amounts of protein according to the degree of cold and the rate of temp increases as we move from spring into summer. Some varieties of wheat need 30 frosts to be able to grow to their optimum. The number of days required to turn into hot summer temperatures affects the protein of the grain. The protein level of wheat grown in NSW at one time was understood to move North with the earlier and hotter summers. The protein as a % of the kernel content, can change from 8-9% to 12-13%. In some of my years farming at Forbes we would get high protein wheat and other years low protein. The % of protein determines the end use of the wheat seed. Seed with high protein is used for special markets in Asia to make Noodles and it is worth more on the market. Usually lower protein wheats are used for breads and cakes. The interesting thing is that wheat seeds are genetically different and though they may look the same they can all grow in an individual way in their particular environment and they then have a particular use.

Is this the same for each individual person? We are genetically different and spiritually different because God has a possible task and ministry for everyone in the special environment that each person inhabits.

Read Ezek 37:14 Joel 2:28-30 1 Cor 12:7-14 and see how these scriptures support this idea

Both protein and starch are needed in the kernel as an early basic food source for the seed to grow. These elements are transformed into glucose by moisture. The glucose feeds the cells that then turn into roots and a coleoptile (shoot) that probes up through the soil into the atmosphere.

The genetic differences between wheat grains determine.

- The future protein potential of its seed development.
- The capacity to grow with differing amounts of moisture.
- Whether there are beards.
- Whether the heads grow upright or hang down.
- The yield potential.

God created us with a diverse potential. We can be used for different outcomes, some are capable of growing as Christians in tough environments, we will look different and maybe even have different theologies, we will have different gifts, we will have different evangelistic out come potentials see Psalm 140:13 -15 1 Cor 12:12-31

What does this imply about the diversity within any group of believers or how we see each other as individuals?

#2 **‘Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains only a single seed.’**

A Christian life to Jesus was considered to be like a seed of wheat. ‘What you sow does not come to life unless it dies’ 1Cor 15:37 We can learn some things from the wheat process that speak to our own lives as Christians. What did Jesus mean about dying to self and putting on a new body? John 12:24



To grow or germinate, the seed has to be transformed. How does it do this?

‘Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains only a single seed.’ .

The starch and protein have to be converted from the inside. **The chemical process** to begin this requires water and warmth. The starch is converted into glucose or sugar and this gives energy to grow cells that become roots reaching out into the soil to seek food, nutrients and more moisture. Unless this root development happens the seed cannot survive. In dry years there may be enough moisture to germinate the seed in autumn but there is not enough to develop roots able to grow into moisture to feed the seed, the subsoil is too dry. Many years particularly in the 2000-2010 period this happened with a dry winter. The seed at germination sends a shoot, called the coleoptile, which grows toward the warmth of the surface. The developing coleoptile begins to develop tillers stems and leaves. The sunlight provides warmth and energy for the developing plant as the leaves use photosynthesis to convert the sunlight into nutrients to feed the growing cells. Both sources of energy supply, roots and leaves, are needed to provide stimulus for growth into a new body. The farmer has to manage the depth below the soil surface that the seed is sown. There are special moisture seeking points and depth gauges to enable this to happen. The seed has to be just deep enough to have access to moisture, if it is too deep the seed may not have enough internal energy to be able to send its coleoptile up into the atmosphere and the sun.

Just as the seed has only a small amount of feed to grow by itself we as spiritual people cannot grow or be transformed by ourselves. We have to develop horizontal Col 3 :16 Fellow Christians and prayer are two examples. and vertical spiritual connections. John 16:12-15 15:5-8

We have to send out our roots to obtain extra spiritual nutrients. This could be from such things as: the bible’s revelation of God’s plan and revelation; other Christian’s teaching; and encouragement or example obtained through sharing in worship. *Heb 10:24-25*

⇒ Can you suggest other items?

⇒ Can you give examples of how this works?

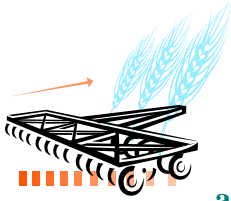
We need these supplies to provide the warmth and nurture for us to begin to grow as Christians. We also must send our version of a coleoptile up to God to be able to receive a different supply of energy. I believe this could be understood to be God providing energy both through Prayer and the Holy Spirit. *Galatians 5:8-14*

Both a downward and outward as well as an upward feeding system are needed to power the conversion and transformation that has to happen with in us to become a new being.

We have to develop a new heart, 1 Sam 10:9 Psalm 51:10 so we can become a new person. Can you share examples or your experience about what has fed and led to your growth and transformation.

#3 The kingdom of God is like a Seed of wheat Matt: 13

All by itself the soil produces grain,, Mark 4:27



Not only is the Christian like a seed of wheat Jesus indicates what happens to a seed of wheat is an indication of what the kingdom of God will be like in that Christian's life. Soil or the environment around the seed is critical because the seed by itself cannot change.



Some seeds obtain enough moisture to **germinate roots and form a coleoptile** but because they are in the wrong environment, the moisture dries up and they cease growing. Unless the root system develops well (there are actually three types of roots needed) the seed can't continue to grow just by feeding itself from within. **Just as any Christian by themselves cannot grow in isolation. What you sow does not come to life unless it dies' 1Cor 15:37, Phil 1:9-11, Col3:1-5** Some seeds do germinate in the atmosphere because they are exposed to too much moisture, this is called shot and sprung wheat. Quite a few harvests on my farm were ready to harvest, and then, we had extended wet periods with lots of rain and the grain grew while it was in the head. This seed loses a lot of its protein, starch and potential because much of this is converted to glucose. BUT incredibly some seeds still have the capacity to regerminate and grow time and again if they are placed in the right environment. Regerminate can occur 3 to 4 times. One year on the farm I had to sow shot and sprung wheat for a crop. It grew! If seeds get too much moisture while in the soil, waterlogging can occur. The seed swells so much that it bursts and dies. With the charismatic movement we saw some Christians who emphasised the gifts and didn't develop their spiritual roots and some did not mature as Christians.

⇒ **What are some of the conditions or situations when you have seen Christians make a decision to be a Christian, become overzealous and then because they do not begin a Christian formation process, they cease becoming a disciple or drop out? Phil:15-18**

Farm machinery technology and sowing techniques are constantly being modified and changed to help farmers provide the **best environment** for seeds to germinate.

The spacing of the seeds is important; the concentration of the seeds; the depth in the soil; the nature of the soil above the seed; the nearness of the soil to the seed; the nearness of the seed to fertiliser; the closeness to moisture; the amount of moisture in the soil at the time of sowing; the seasonal prospect for how much moisture the seed will receive over the next 5 months; the variety of seed matched to suit the climate and moisture expectations; the nature and type of weed competition expected; protection of the seed from some diseases.

Every item listed is important and predetermines the nature of the growth and the eventual yield that can be expected.

The church, as a body of believers, are the farmers for other Christians. They can provide the appropriate environment and conditions for Christian growth and maturity. Phil. 2:6-15 Eph 4:14-16 I think the church could learn from farmers for the continual need to change and modify the way the seeds of faith can be sown and nurtured in other people. There is a parallel and parable about all the considerations the church can and needs to make to provide and create the best environment in all the above wheat seed considerations. **Density, spacing, closeness to moisture, need for moisture, planning, fertiliser assistance, weed eradication, disease and pest protection, matching the seeds with the environment. What is the equivalent spiritual or church practice? Eph 5:8-11,19-21**

#4 The kingdom of God is like a Seed of wheat Matt: 13

All by itself the soil produces grain, First the stalk,Mark 4:28



The kingdom of God forms within the Christian life in a number of stages that can be interrupted or shape the way we develop as Christians. Some ideas about how we know a wheat seed multiplies and develops, can help us understand how our faith and witness is shaped.

A seed, germinates, then develops a root system and puts out a coleoptile (shoot) that pushes up through the soil into the air and sun. It has to then go through 2 stages, a vegetative phase followed by a reproductive phase.

The vegetative phase is critical to determining what potential yield could result. The number of **tillers buds** (potential head forming stalks) is determined at this very early 3 and 5 leaf stage of the wheat plants life. We all come to forks in our lives when we could go in a number of directions. Phil 2:25-30 *The opportunities to experience or be exposed to some extra training, study or ministry direction happen repeatedly in your growing career life as well as your spiritual life. I had to sell my farm and God opened up a TAFE teaching job. I was suddenly being trained to teach adults!* Can you remember the critical formation events that have shaped your effectiveness now as a Christian and/or the potential pathway you have followed or not followed as a Christian?

A plant begins to tiller at the axils of the leaves, the number of tillers is limited by the amount and the production of energy from the emerging leaves. The leaf growth and development, now depends on the amount of photosynthesis (sunlight converting capacity to make energy into nutrients) Photosynthesis is restricted by: the temperature; moisture; the amount of Carbon dioxide in the air; the length of the day; sunlight and the amount of nutrients supplied by the root system.

More tillers appear than can possibly survive but some just stop growing. The actual number is strongly influenced by the competition from other plants or weeds. I have been a farmer, woolclasser, TAFE teacher, father of 4, pastoral visitor. Each tiller has affected my yield. Can you remember some potential tillers, branches of potential ministry, in your life that stopped growing because you lost spiritual energy or circumstances stopped growing?

Spiritual formation and development is critical in this equivalent vegetative stage of a young Christian's life. Our prayer life, our ability to train ourself with practises that will help us to be receptive to God, our study of God's revelation of himself historically and in the lives of others are the root development and the form of photosynthesis that will determine what our Christian witness results will be. I learnt how to teach Sunday school, lead youth groups, camps, conferences, I studied lay preaching, I studied by correspondence theological college subjects.

The environment we as young Christians immerse ourselves in affects how we grow. What have been the spiritual equivalents of: competition, temperature, moisture, carbon dioxide, day length and sunlight in your life?

Discipleship formation has to happen beyond Sunday school or youth group and happen at a deeper level if we are to effectively survive the struggles of life as a Christian. The potential tillers developing in our life, at this time, I understand to be the life and spiritual experiences that will enable us to produce spiritual fruit in separate parts of our lives later in life.

#5 The kingdom of God is like a Seed of wheat Matt: 13

All by itself the soil produces grain, First the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. Mark 4:28



A Christian begins to live in the kingdom of God and can grow and bring others into the kingdom just as a grain of wheat can multiply.

How are these plant conditions parallel to the Christian experience?

The reproductive phase of a wheat plant won't occur until at least two stimuli are present in the correct quantities, low temperature and day length. These two conditions produce a hormone that begins to stimulate budding and flowering in each stalk. This begins wheat ear development followed by grain filling.

The amount of wheat ear development depends on the source and supply of nutrients. A forming head of wheat can be elongated to the potential of up to 25+grains long. Two opposite rows develop along a stalk at the same time. If moisture and nutrients supplies are plentiful this can expand up to 4 double rows (8 rows of grain). That's right! Today's wheat heads have been known to produce up to 200 grains and if there are 8 tillers from that one seed there are now 8 x 200 grains.

We have developed wheat breeding a lot since Jesus' time. Likewise with technology, Christian witnessing tools give us levels of multiplication of disciple growing and formation never possible before and these tools are available for almost every believer. I now use my website, articles and some magazines to reach many people.

I used to be worried about being branded as full of myself but I now recognise I am not full of myself but full of the Holy Spirit. I try and make a point every time to give God the glory.

The Christian needs a spiritual stimuli to begin ministry and for the early Christians it was the physical evidence of the power of the Holy spirit. For me it was some miraculous evidences of the Holy Spirit. John 14:25-27 Acts 1:8 Can you name your stimuli or haven't you experienced a stimuli?

The grain buds and tillering stages are very critical to the final yield result. They can, and are interrupted by: diseases such as rust and mould (both can inhibit nutrients flow); lack of moisture and nutrients (the root development has not been adequate); or frost (this will kill the flowering buds). Can you name some of the equivalent spiritual outside inhibitors that can or have limited your spiritual growth in this development stage? I found the Anglican church closed a lot of doors for me to continue to grow in ministry. John 17:13-18 Acts 4:18 Acts 8:1,4

#6 Good seed produces a crop, a hundred, sixty or thirty fold what was sown Matt 13:8 & 23



Jesus expects every Christian to go and tell others the good news about the kingdom this multiplication of our own joining the kingdom is like the multiplication of the wheat seed and we have similar inhibitors. Acts 5:41,42 Acts 6:7 Acts 8:4 11:19-21

The grain filling stage is when the whole plant puts all its energy and nutrients into developing grain. There is a flowering and pollinating period that can be over one week that makes the plant especially vulnerable to temperature nutrient and moisture availability. If frost occurs at this time the flower, stamen and stigma are frozen and die. Parts of a head of wheat or the whole head of wheat can be affected. Likewise rust in the leaves of the plant can create hole in the stem that allow moisture to leak and reduce the water, nutrients that the capillary action of the plant uses to feed the ears as they flower and fill. The grain starch to fill the grains comes from the leaves and the exposed ears of wheat. The protein in the grain comes from the leaves and the soil. The duration of this stage is determined by moisture and temperature which both influences the starch and protein content of each grain as it develops. After the grains are filled, dehydration and hardening occurs.

It is interesting that this could imply that people need to at some stage in their Christian walk, put all their spiritual strength and energies into disciple making but this makes us especially vulnerable. It is also interesting because it also implies there are only stages in your life when the greatest disciplinmaking potential can occur.

This happened to me when I was between 18- 32 years in age.

There are events or circumstances that can interrupt the amount of flowering and growth in your spiritual walk and witness. My ministry emphasise changed radically when I became a father with teenage children. Have you been especially vulnerable over a particular time period in your life. Phil 1:12-14

The actual yield of each wheat seed and plant is critically determined by the environmental stresses during the early growing and development stage. The water and nutrient supply are critical in determining how well a plant copes at the tillering stage and at the flowering stage. James 1:2-8

The environment we place ourselves in with our work, recreation, leisure and family determine the stress level we will face. Paul warns us in Phil 4:8 Col;3:1-3,12-14 **we have to focus our thought, thinking and our mind on pure things of God especially during busy parts of our lives when stress levels increase. It is through our developed spiritual formation root system of connecting with God that will efficiently feed us through these times.** Our spiritual supply obtained by prayer and claiming the Holy Spirits power and presence will be our nutrient supply system in times of stress and if we get through the times of stress we can begin to bear fruit just as a grain of wheat does. Psalm 1:3 Hebrews 12: 7-13

‘We can be like a tree planted by streams of water’ our root system is well developed.

#7 Jesus emphasised the impact of 4 different soil properties affecting the gospel message growth in people lives.

*The first type of soil mentioned are:....**hard**.....(a compacted path) these people don't understand and quickly leave the faith..... Matt13:5ff Mark 4:1-13 Luke 8:5-15*

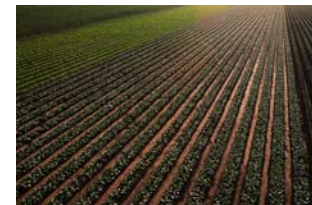
Jesus says the message of the kingdom is received by people in the same way as different soil types receive and grow wheat. The parallels of what happens with today's farmer as he sows seed elaborate some aspects of the responsiveness of people today.

The sower places the seed

Cropping today in Australia because of the irregular rainfall and continuous droughts has meant farmers have to pay special attention to their soils if they are to produce a crop of any sort. Soils and the amount of moisture they contain are critical to any crop production. Jesus indicated in his parable of the sower the parallel between the receptivity of people to the gospel and the way their faith develops and survives with these soil types. Our understanding of this in today's terms can add extra dimensions to Jesus' parable.



Soil moisture content is related to the soil particle shape and the amount of air space between particles. The placing of the seed near to this moisture as well as near to fertiliser is critical and machinery today has press wheels and differential seeding



tubes to ensure this happens. The porosity of the soil, allows moisture to move through the soil. Different soils with different amounts of clay have different potential porosity but they are all affected by compaction. **Soil compaction** such as under a tractor, implant wheel, an animal or human footprint puts pressure on the soil and reduces the available pore space and therefore water availability. Also the seed cannot be placed deeply enough and is prey to birds scratching for grain. Farmers today are tram wheeling paddocks so that all implements only travel along the same path in a paddock to alleviate the impact of vehicle tracks. Some elect not graze stock on a paddock at all or if they do have stock they do not graze if the soil is wet because of the degree of compaction that results from the hooves of the animals. The modern GPS driven equipment is satellite driven and allows the compaction tracks of an implement wheel in a paddock to be minimalised to the nearest 10cm. Moisture can be understood to be equivalent to the sap that runs through us when we are grafted onto the vine so that fruit can result. **Moisture is the equivalent of having God's Spirit running through us and causing change and growth.** James 1:19-27 1Peter 1:13-16

Farmers are changing their farm practices because they understand the impact of their old practices.

What are some practices in the church that Jesus indicated creates a hardness of heart that impedes spiritual growth? I have always found it very difficult to cope with so many denominations all claiming to have the exclusively correct interpretation or practice of how to be a Christian. 2Peter1:1-3, 1John 2:3-6

What are some church activities that we see leading to a shallow faith or a misunderstood version of the actual gospel message that the church is meant to represent? 1John 4:1-3

Do you recognise times in your spiritual walk when you have stopped growing because you have not been near enough to moisture or fertiliser to keep growing.

#8 Jesus emphasised the impact of 4 different soil properties affecting the gospel message growth in people lives.

*The second type of soil is **Not deep**..... (rocky or shallow usually deficient)
These people last a short time but have no roots, no moisture, and can't survive trouble & persecution..... Matt13:5ff Mark 4:1-13 Luke 8:5-15*



Shallow or hard pans in the soil stunt or stop crop growth and we can see how farm practices and church practises may have to change to prevent this happening.

For many years farmers used implements and European cultivation practices that worked deep alluvial soils to the depth required for seed germination engineered for a soil type very different to the generally **shallower soils** that we have in Australia. Over years with multiple cultivations this led to the development of what is described as a hard pan in many areas. (A layer of soil horizon at about 30 mm of depth that became a hard barrier to root development and moisture penetration) To penetrate this hard pan implements had to be especially invented that would deep rip the soil to allow water and root systems to penetrate below this depth. In poorer, skeletal soils, there is generally poor soil horizon development because there is not enough depth before bedrock. These soils have very little capacity to hold moisture and crops will burn off whenever they have a hard dry spell. The shallow soil types and many other soil types in Australia are typically deficient in some basic elements needed for healthy plant growth. Phosphorous is the most common missing element and then nitrogen and often in some poorer soils some trace elements such as Molybdenum or Boron. All of these problems reduce the amount of root development, the health of the plant and the amount of access to moisture that allows continued growth in times of stress. See the spiritual equivalent in Romans 5:3-5

Some life practices interfere with people developing a deep root faith system that enables them to cope with life's troubles? Luke 9:57-62 1 Cor 6:1-8

It may be allowing clergy dominance of all christian practices that you should be learning? 1Cor 12:12-14

Some practices or events in peoples lives actually form a hard pan that won't allow people to develop spiritually beyond a certain point. 1 Cor 14:26

It can be the church environment, an event or can it be a spiritual formation bad practice that creates a barrier? 1 Cor1:10-12

What could be the equivalent of trace element or phosphorous deficiency? I wonder if it may not be exposure to multiple personalities, spiritual gifts and Christians in different walks of life! We are meant to be corporate believers and exposure to many types of Christians helps us see and understand better how to cope with many troubles and persecutions.

#9

The third type of soil Jesus talked about was:

soil full of weed seeds... people who allow worries, wealth, pleasures, desire for things to compete for and choke spiritual development priorities...



Weeds are one of the biggest problems most crop growers face. Christians in society today have a tremendous amount of competition for the Christian message to take hold in a persons life. Gal 5:16-18



The parallels are obvious.

The amount of organic layer on top of a soil (mulch) we now know makes a tremendous difference to the amount of moisture penetration as well as the amount of drying out of the soil. The soil carbon content is a good measure of this and the practice of direct drilling of crops, stubble sowing and minimum till are practises that are being used extensively. The problem with all these methods is that there is no management or **control of weed seeds**. Most of these methods of sowing are combined with chemical control of weeds before sowing if possible or after sowing when the nature of the weed germination is identified. More sustainable practices are not as effective in the short term to manage weed infestation and they include: rotation of crop types with different seasonal growth characteristics; Pre management of weeds by mowing or spray topping; cultivation to prevent weed seeding; strategic grazing, burning of stubble or variety selection of crop with a different seasonal growth pattern to common weeds; harvest and grain hygiene; sowing density and depth of crop seeds. 2 Cor 6:3-10

The weed problem is the greatest problem for all croppers. The easy control strategies may be the simplest and quick fix but it is often not sustainable and can lead to more complex problems as farmers are finding with chemical resistance by some weeds.

The worries and competition for a Christian to have the correct balance in priorities are one of a Christians biggest challenges today. 2 Cor 6:14 Often the quickest and easiest solution for a Christian is to withdraw from society and not have any non Christian friends or non church activities. Only worship and fellowship with people of the same theological belief and comfortable with the same Christian practices. Why is this not healthy and sustainable? 1 Peter 2:9-10 Eph2:14-18

What are some helpful sustainable practices that a Christian can learn as part of sustainable spiritual formation to help cope with society's temptation to become too busy, to consume, to make money or own property, to enjoy yourself with the worlds pleasures?

#10 The fourth type of soil Jesus talked about was:

.....good soil.....people who hear understand and produce disciples...

Matt13:5ff Mark 4:1-13 Luke 8:5-15



Psalm 1:3

'We can be like a tree planted by streams of water' our root system is well developed and we can survive all sort of difficulties.



There are some soils where everything is right to be able to grow a good crop and some people have all the conditions needed to grow in faith and share that faith with others multiplying the message. **Just as the soil requires a team effort of many components and elements there is a need for a team effort to grow and yield as a christian.**Ephesians 4:17--5:2

Good soil for crops are soils with the right soil particle structure, the right balance of minerals and elements, and an adequate depth of soil that will allow moisture and root systems to penetrate. In really good loamy soil, water probe metres are used to determine the amount and depth of moisture present. This can be matched with the water use efficiency of a variety of wheat, added onto the anticipated rainfall events and therefore water available to the plant likely over the growing season an anticipated yield can be calculated even before sowing. To then optimise this potential yield the addition of nutrients and fertiliser during the growing phase may be added to improve and maximise the resulting yield. In this good soil earth worms grow. Earth worms themselves, multiply and move up and down the soil digesting, mixing, aerating and bringing nutrients nearer to the surface for plant roots as well as allowing moisture penetration of rain to extend further down the soil profile. The organic matter in the top layer of this soil absorbs moisture carbon and nutrients that all help the wheat seed development.

Even in good soil conditions plant development can be enhanced. Romans 5:1-5

What are some Christian formation processes that will enhance the spread of the gospel and Christian discipleship making? It doesn't always mean there will be no difficulties in your life John 15:5 Mark 16:15-18 Acts 1:8 Romans 8:9-17

2 Cor 6:3-10 11:21-30

The soil to be good and productive requires a balance for so many elements and even then supplementation can improve everything even more. What has been the balance of people, events, circumstances and situations that have helped your acceptance of the gospel that have enabled it to grow to fruition?