

Parable of the sower and the bible

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



Introduction

Octavia Butler concludes Parable of the Sower with the namesake Bible excerpt: what are the parallels between Lauren's journey to spread Earthseed and the parabolic farmer's journey to sow his seed? More specifically, what were the underlying causes for the compact, rocky, thorny, and good soils?

Wasted Seeds

In the parable that Jesus told, the farmer first tossed his seed onto the path that he walked. Because this worn path was made of compacted and infertile soil, pedestrians kicked these seeds and ground them into dust with their heel, while birds snacked on the leftover seeds. These wasted seeds, desperately trying to penetrate the never-plowed path, symbolize how the “seeds of religion” cannot penetrate someone who is as hardened off to the idea of a new religion. Lauren was still living with her Baptist-minister father, Reverend Olamina, when she established Earthseed on April 26 of 2025 (101). Although Lauren Olamina never had the courage, or opportunity, to share Earthseed with him, Reverend Olamina would have been a prime example of a seed tossed to the path. Her father was already wholly dedicated to his Baptist faith and was impenetrable in the eyes of the Earthseed founder. Additionally, Lauren held such respect toward her father that she even got baptized in the first chapter, rather than coming clean about Earthseed (17). Despite her hyperempathy, Lauren states that her father's emotional wellbeing is the one thing she worked hardest to protect (258).

Rocky Soil

The next stanza told of the farmer's seeds falling upon rocky soil, indicating shallow soil with an underlying rock that the plow was unable to crack apart. Seeds that were cast upon this rocky soil withered away because of dehydration and lack of strong roots. This symbolizes someone who has received the message of Earthseed and initially is receptive, however after prosecution or hardship, they quickly forsake the religion. The best example of this in Parable of the Sower would be Taylor Franklin Bankole, one of Lauren's strongest allies and proponent of the Acorn community. Bankole was skeptical of Earthseed when Lauren first shared it with him, however he experienced moments of interest throughout the second-half of the novel (303). He even supports Earthseed so much as to encourage the settlement on his land in northern California, however through various hardships it is clear that he mostly supports the idea of the commune, not necessarily the religion. In the funeral ceremony held at Acorn in the final moments of the novel, there are readings from both Earthseed and the Bible (372). This is an homage to his Christian faith, something that he dips into throughout the novel.

Thorny Soil

When the seeds were tossed onto the thorny soil, the weeds grew so fast as to stifle the growth of the farmer's intended crop. This symbolizes someone who hears the word, but is so concerned with worldly possessions and hardships, that the religion is unable to take seed in their heart. The best example of this in Parable of the Sower is Harry Balter, Lauren's childhood friend who joins with her and Zahra Moss after Robledo is destroyed.

Throughout the journey to Bankole's plot of land in the north, Harry is resistant to taking Earthseed serious (221). Where Reverend Olamina was resistant because of his Baptist faith and Bankole faltered because of hardships endured, Harry was impenetrable because of his focus on worldly aims. Harry's main aspiration for the future was to build individual wealth and create something he could own, even despite a lack of good job opportunities (327). Although he joins the Acorn settlement at the end of the novel, Harry was not able to embrace Earthseed because he prioritized building individual success over building up the community or exploring his spirituality.

Good Soil

At the end of Jesus's parable, the farmer finally threw the seeds onto good soil – which provided an environment to grow in the absence of birds, dehydration, and weeds. In Parable of the Sower, Lauren finds her first patch of good soil with Travis Charles Douglas, an ally who begins the Earthseed settlement with Lauren and Bankole. Travis challenged Lauren when she first introduced him to Earthseed, however his difficult questions and serious demeanor showed that he took Earthseed seriously (260). Harry, on the other hand, refused to have honest dialogue concerning Earthseed and would poke fun at Lauren's religion whenever an opportunity presented itself – such as when he introduced their traveling group to Allie and Jill Gilchrist (221 and 237, respectively). Despite his initial resistance, Travis, along with Zahra, began to embrace Earthseed as a legitimate belief system and entropy as an admirable god.

Sunlight and Moisture

Just as sunlight and moisture allowed the farmer's seeds to sprout in the good soil, dire circumstances and the failure of Reverend Olamina's God allowed the seeds of Earthseed to thrive within Travis's and Zahra's hearts. At the end of the novel, the characters have reached the desperation breaking point – their cities have been burned to the ground, their communities have become disjointed and apathetic, their loved ones are lost. Throughout this process of loss and learning, Lauren has continued to develop Earthseed. By the time she introduces the traveling community to Earthseed, their hearts are hungry for hope and purpose. Along with this, Reverend Olamina's God paved the way for this good soil, because the preachings of the Bible no longer suited the characters' communities. There were terrible God-produced disasters everywhere – such as a hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico – which conflicted with the narrative of a supposedly loving God (18). Most notably, the Bible's Ten Commandments put adherents in challenging situations, because often stealing and killing were necessary for survival in the Lauren's California (208). Additionally, the passive preachings of the Bible encouraged the inefficient reactivity, rather than efficient proactivity, that has brought the community to ruin.

Bare Fruit An Hundredfold

One of the most important pieces of this excerpt from the Bible is the final phrase: “bare fruit an hundredfold” (373). Acorn, the final destination for the Earthseed clan, was founded with a pocketful of seeds and a journal full of hope. Diving deeper into the symbolic meaning behind this phrase, this relates to when Lauren watched as her adherents shared the word of

Earthseed with Allie and Jill (311). The goal of these seeds planted is that these mature plants will spread their seed without the urging of the farmer; the goal of the religion shared is that these newly dedicated converts will spread their doctrines without the urging of Lauren.