KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material

Matthew 13:1-23

Week of 5th to 11th of November

The Parable of the Sower

Leader Preparation

This week begins a focus on the parables – looking at the reasons Jesus spoke in parables, and their meaning. Read through the passage so that you are familiar with it. Read through the material on pages 37-40 of the CG leader manual.

The passage this week looks at:

- Why does Jesus speak in parables?
- What contributes to people hearing, understanding, accepting and putting into action the word of God? – and what are the results when they do?
- What are the conditions that prevent people from accepting Jesus – or that cause them to stumble along the way?

There may be two different sermons on Sunday, so different components may seem relevant to your group discussion!

Pray for your small group members. Commit each of them to God, entrusting their lives and growth to him.

Group Time:

Discussion suggestions:

- Who in your group has “green fingers”, loving to garden? Share what you each enjoy (or don’t!) about spending time growing things.
- The 80s saw a fad of “Magic Eye” images, stereoscopic pictures that allowed people to see a 3D image in a 2D picture. Have a look at a couple of these (try https://earthlymission.com/best-magic-eye-stereograms-3d-viewing-explanation/ or https://www.magiceye.com/stwkdisp.htm) and talk about:
    - who in the group can see the hidden image?
    - who can’t? *(this is not a sign of an eye problem!)*
    - In this situation or any other, how does it feel to not see, hear or understand something that is obvious to others?

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 13:1-23

Focusing on Matthew 13:10-17:

Why does Jesus speak in parables?

1. What does verse 11 say we must do to receive the secrets of God's Kingdom?
- See Matthew 16:17, 1 Corinthians 12:3, Ephesians 2:8

Insight into the truth is a gift from the Holy Spirit, not our own doing

- As people who have seen and recognized the goodness of God, how should we respond to Jesus giving us this knowledge of the truth?
- When we encounter people who have not "seen" or "heard" the truth about Jesus, how can we make a difference to their response? *(mainly to pray that God would work in their hearts to reveal himself to them)*

2. Read verses 12 and 13 –

- Think of this in the context of last week – Jesus saying that the religious leaders would be judged harshly in comparison to the Ninevites and the queen of Sheba, that what they had witnessed was enough grounds for them to believe.

Insight into the truth is as much a matter of the heart as of the head

- Some things that prevent us from applying the word that we hear:
    - Unwillingness to change – John 7:17
    - Cherishing sin in our hearts – Psalm 66:18
    - Apathy – Jeremiah 29:13-14
    - Hating others – 1 John 4:20

Focusing on the Parable of the Sower:

Looking at the parable of the sower, how does the physical description relate to Jesus' definition of what it symbolises? For the soils, try to describe what you would see in the life of a person who followed this course.

	DESCRIPTION (verses 3-9)	**INTERPRETATION** (verses 18-23)
Sower		*(tricky: Jesus doesn't actually identify the sower!)*
Seed		
Soil 1		
Soil 2		
Soil 3		
Soil 4		

Can you think of a time in your life when your response to God reflected aspects of one of the first 3 kinds of soil?

When you think of your life now, what could be stopping you from bearing a fruitful harvest?

What are the fruits that we might see in the life of someone whose heart is good soil for God's seed?

Prayer

Spend some time quietly reflecting on your walk with God:

- Are there reasons that you have "heard" the word, but something has hardened your response and prevented you from absorbing it and being changed by it?
- Are there difficulties you have faced that have stopped you from holding on to God's truth?
- Is your life just too full of the "cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches" for God's word to be able to take root? How can you start to hand this over to God?
- Is there an area where God wants to grow you, to allow your life to be more fruitful?

LORD Jesus

Thank you for entrusting me with the message about you.

I don't understand it fully, but thank you for allowing me to hear and see at least a part of it.

Please allow your truth to grow deep into my heart, so that when I experience the difficulties that life brings, I can cling to you.

Please help me to weed out of my life the distractions that take my focus away from you.

Plant your seed of truth deep within me and water it so that my life bears a great harvest for you LORD.

I pray for those who have not understood or responded to your word. By your Holy Spirit, may they hear and see the truth, so that your sacrifice would bear fruit in them.

AMEN

Perhaps give your group members a few seeds to take home with them to remember the truths of this lesson – remind them to plant them in good soil!

