Community Group Discussion Guide

Gospel of Mark Project – The Sower

Icebreakers:

1. Are you a person who likes to garden? (Why or why not?)
2. What is the most difficult “thing” you ever tried and succeeded to grow in your garden? (What has been nearly impossible for you to grow?)
3. Which plant has proved to be the fastest growing and also fruitful?

Scripture Passage: Mark 4:1-20 NASB95

He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land. [2] And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, [3] “Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; [4] as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. [5] Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. [6] And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. [7] Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. [8] Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.” [9] And He was saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” [10] As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. [11] And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, [12] so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN.” [13] And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? [14] The sower sows the word. [15] These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. [16] In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; [17] and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. [18] And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, [19] but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. [20] And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

The Big Idea: The obvious takeaway from Jesus’ parable of the sower is that in order to reap any kind of harvest, a farmer must plant seeds. What happens to the seeds after they are sown is up to God; however, if the gospel goes unproclaimed (unplanted) then any kind of harvest will be impossible. (Refer to Romans 10:13-14 “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.” [14] How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?)

Digging Deeper:

Section 1: Jesus tells the parable of the sower

[1] He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land. [2] And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, [3] “Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; [4] as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. [5] Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. [6] And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. [7] Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. [8] Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.” [9] And He was saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

* Jesus understood the basic principle behind farming. You plant, you reap. What is your spiritual understanding of the principle of sowing and reaping? (Notice that Gal 6:7 expands our understanding of this concept)
* What truth or truths can we gain from understanding this parable, and what makes this parable important for the church today?

Section 2: Jesus explains His use of parables

[10] As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. [11] And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, [12] so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN.” [13] And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?

* Why do you think that spiritual understanding was so difficult for the religious leaders of Jesus’ time?
* What do you think was the source of the Pharisees spiritual blindness? (The Enemy, their personal egos, God)

Section 3: Jesus gives the interpretation of the parable of the sower

[14] The sower sows the word. [15] These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. [16] In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; [17] and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. [18] And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, [19] but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. [20] And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

* What is the process by which an idea (whether an evil idea, or life-giving truth) is able to transform our basic understanding?
* Have you observed the Word of God landing in the different soils or hearts as described in this parable?
* How can the worries of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things stunt the spiritual growth of an individual?

Wrap-up: I see two obvious takeaways from this parable.

* Firstly, the proclamation of the Gospel Message has a direct tie to the harvest. Romans 1:16a For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes…
* Secondly, not everyone is going to respond to the Gospel Message with faith. We proclaim with the knowledge that the “word” will fall on all kinds of different soil.