

Let's Go Group Studies Leader's Notes

1. We're providing this material to you to remove some of the stress and frustration of developing a plan to lead a specific group study. It isn't meant to replace your individual preparation to lead. Our hope is that you would use it as a guide to your engagement with the text and the Holy Spirit and allow Him to lead you as you help your study's participants to have their own relevant encounter with scripture and the Holy Spirit.
2. This plan isn't meant to constrain you to lead in any specific way. Please feel free to modify it to better meet the needs of your group and to honor your gifting and authentic style. For example, when and how you pray and share prayer needs should be in a rhythm that is good for your group as long as you are praying as a group. For another, who reads it and how scripture is read should fit your group and its needs as long as it is read somehow.
3. Be authentic. If you find yourself saying "They are asking" as in, 'I didn't write this question and I don't really understand why it is being asked.' Don't ask it. Ask something else. It is okay not to understand everything. No one understands everything. If you don't believe in what you're saying, why should anyone else believe it? One way to turn this into a positive is to admit to the group that you are struggling with figuring out a particular bit and allow someone else to contribute their God-given wisdom.
4. Some questions, especially earlier in the study, aren't meant to be a mile deep or transformative. These questions are intended to prompt the participants to notice what is there. It gives them a way to begin to care about the specific words on the page.
5. Portions of the plan in quotes are meant to be spoken out loud to the group as in, "Who is buried in Grant's Tomb?" You don't have to repeat the question or statement exactly as it appears. Say it in a way that feels comfortable and natural for you.
6. Portions of the plan in *italics* are meant to be notes to you that you can use as prompts in aiding group discussion. They aren't the definitive answer but should be a good possible answer.
7. The last page is the participant handout.

Let's Go- Seed Planters

- 1) Scripture: Mark 4:1-25
 - a) Parallel passages: Matt 13:1-23 Luke 8:4-15
- 2) Objective: After studying the listed scripture and participating in the discussion, each person should be able to identify one way in which he or she can better prepare their heart to receive God's Word.
- 3) Resources: Book of Mark, Grassmick. The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Walvoord & Zuck; Easton's Bible Dictionary, Easton, M.G., both Copyright 1983, 2003, 2004 by Cook Communications Ministries
- 4) Preparation:
 - a) Pray for guidance
 - b) Read entire lesson plan
- 5) Prayer requests & Open in prayer
- 6) Intro:
 - a) "Tonight, we are going to dive deep into what is sometimes quoted as *The Parable of the of the Soils* or *Sower*. Jesus' teaching makes clear the relationship between hearing and understanding in relation to the condition of our hearts. Parables are an integral part of his teaching and understanding why and how he uses them is important to understanding what he intends for us to do because of them. This parable helps us to look for the conditions in a person's life that might keep them from accepting God's Word into their heart with joy. If we know those conditions, we may be able to soften them so that God's truth can penetrate and root deeply into their life.
 - b) When we are done, each of us should be able to identify one way in which we can better prepare our hearts to receive God's Word."
- 7) The study
 - a) Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 4:1-2.
 - b) Ask "What do these verses tell us about what Jesus is about to say?" *His audience is a large mixed group who likely have a wide variety of reasons for being there. Compare this passage to Mark 4:33-34 and consider how these two brief sections bookend these parables. How might they help us understand the passage between them?*
 - i) *Parable-* (Gr. *parabole*), a placing beside; a comparison; equivalent to the Heb. *mashal*, a similitude. In the Old Testament this is used to denote (1) a proverb (1 Sam 10:12; 24:13; 2 Chr 7:20), (2) a prophetic utterance (Num

23:7 Ezek 20:49), (3) an enigmatic saying (Ps 78:2 Prov 1:6. In the New Testament, (1) a proverb (Mark 7:17; Luke 4:23), (2) a typical emblem (Heb 9:9 11:19), (3) a similitude or allegory (Matt 15:15; 24:32; Mark 3:23; Luke 5:36; 14:7; (4) ordinarily, in a more restricted sense, a comparison of earthly with heavenly things, "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning," as in the parables of our Lord. From Easton's Bible Dictionary

- c) Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 4:3-9
- d) Ask everyone to complete question 1 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.
 - i) "You've heard some interesting things about Jesus and have decided that this was the day you would come and hear him for yourself. This is the first thing you've heard him say. What is your initial reaction to his words?" *Why is he speaking in riddles? I think I understand what he is trying to say. This guy must really like boats.*
- e) Ask "What is exciting about Jesus' parable and what is confusing? Does who and what you are effect how you understand this story?" *Jesus makes it clear that everyone should pay close attention and think carefully about what he is saying. There is a promise of productivity. Jesus speaks into our lives in a way that is meaningful for the individual.*
- f) Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 4:10-12
- g) Ask "How does Jesus' reasoning to his disciples in private differ from his story in public?" *Why some are kept from understanding isn't explicit here but should likely be understood in relation to the 'Unforgiveable Sin' passage given the context. The fact of his intent that some aren't meant to understand the 'secret of the Kingdom of God' is clear. Compare Isa. 6:9-10.*
- h) Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 4:13-20
- i) Ask everyone to complete question 2 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.
 - i) "Given that Jesus only intends for those of the Kingdom of God to understand his true meaning, why do you think Jesus offers four different categories of response for those that hear his word?" *Is he preparing us to spread his kingdom by telling us the conditions of rejection of himself so that we in turn know how to prepare the soil of human hearts for their eventual acceptance of Jesus? Is he explaining the condition of our own hearts so that we might better receive his words?*
- j) Ask "If producing a bountiful harvest for God's Kingdom has meaning for you, what is that meaning?" *Rewarding to be used, producing at such a scale would be a nice change, being part of something bigger than myself.*

- k) Ask “Do you recognize any of these conditions Jesus described in your attempts to share God’s Word? What succeeded or failed? How does understanding the conditions of a person’s life help you to help them better receive God’s Word?” *I can understand how to pray specifically, I can create a space and time where the cares of the world intrude less, I can love on someone until the soil of their heart is ready to receive the seed of God’s Word (be supernaturally patient)*
 - l) Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 4:21-25
 - m) Ask everyone to complete question 3 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.
 - i) “What call to action do you find here? What challenges you specifically and how does it challenge you?” *Ideally, these answers come from the participants. Whether they get them from the study, the Sunday sermon or elsewhere, the best thing that can happen here is they are verbalized by the participants.*
 - n) Ask everyone to complete question 4 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.
 - i) “*Who understands what* is a main theme of this passage and it would be easy to focus on that and lose sight of Jesus’ promise here that we are meant to play a significant role in the harvest of his kingdom. How can you prepare you heart tonight and throughout this week to be in a better condition to receive His Word and put it into practice?”
- 8) Summary:
- a) You can briefly recap main points raised in the discussion or you can affirm and encourage the lessons and applications the participants developed.
 - b) Close in prayer

Let's Go- Seed Planters

Mark 4:1-25

1) You've heard some interesting things about Jesus and have decided that this was the day you would come and hear him for yourself. This is the first thing you've heard him say. What is your initial reaction to his words?

2) Given that Jesus only intends for those of the Kingdom of God to understand his true meaning, why do you think Jesus offers four different categories of response for those that hear his word?

3) What call to action do you find here? What challenges you specifically and how does it challenge you?

4) *Who understands what* is a main theme of this passage and it would be easy to focus on that and lose sight of Jesus' promise here that we are meant to play a significant role in the harvest of his kingdom. How can you prepare you heart tonight and throughout this week to be in a better condition to receive His Word and put it into practice?

For next time... Read Mark 4:26-41