

CALVARY CHAPEL COSTA MESA

COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

“Kingdom Parables” Mark 4:21-34

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MAIN IDEA

One of my favorite activities growing up was going out to the desert with my dad, riding motorcycles, and camping out under the stars. I don't know that we even owned a tent at the time. If you have ever been in the mountains or desert at night, you know how amazing and clear the sky is. Away from the lights of city, one can see so much more clearly the wonder of the Milky Way Galaxy. Clarity is important in listening to God too. While the content of what God says definitely important, Jesus presses the question of, “How well are we listening?” There are many voices in our culture that compete for our attention. So many in fact, they pollute the spiritual sky of our lives. God speaks to every aspect of who we are, but how can we position ourselves to receive the best signal or reception from the Master?

SCRIPTURAL INSIGHT

“Large streams from little fountains flow, and mighty oaks from little acorns grow.” This proverb was first recorded in the 18th century, and is quoted when trying to express the idea that all large and powerful endeavors usually begin as small and insignificant. This was Jesus' idea when pointing to the Kingdom of God as being like a mustard seed. While proverbially small, in the end, the mustard seed of Jesus' teaching will become so large that it sprouts branches like a tree and birds will perch in it. The tree alludes to the prophetic cedar that is God's Kingdom extending to all peoples of the world (Ezekiel 17:23; 31:6; Daniel 4:21).

READ & DISCUSS

Read out loud together Mark 4:21-34 and discuss how all these parables might go together in a singular idea, and how we can apply that truth to our lives.

KEY VERSES

Mark 4:23-25

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT GOD...

- The sower of the parables represents God. *What do we learn about His character from these parables?*
- *How is God's grace revealed in that he always begins small, rather than grand schemes when it comes to our lives? What in our lives reminds us of His constant presence?*
- *What has God sown into your life that started small, but grew and became an influence on others, maybe a character trait, a skill, or a passion?*

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT SPIRITUAL GROWTH...

- *What are some obstacles or fears you face when you go to read the Word? When you go to read the Bible, what do you expect to happen? What do you do if this doesn't happen? How do you experience God's grace in your Bible reading?*
- Read Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12 which likens the Word of God as a sword for God's Spirit. *How does Hebrews 4:12 help us understand the Word and our relationship with it? How have you experienced the Bible as “living”?*

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT BUILDING COMMUNITY..

- Listening and waiting on God is a personal discipline worth cultivating, but Jesus also took time to get alone and explain things to His disciples as a group. (*Mark 4:34*) *How does listening to God as a small group help to bring clarity? How do each of our experiences, genders, or educations compliment each other in understanding God's Word?*

PRAYER & TESTIMONY

Scripture teaches us how to talk to God. In your group or on your own this week, pray Paul's prayer for the Ephesians (Ephesians 1:15-21) for yourself and your Community Group.

SPIRITUAL APPLICATION & PRACTICE

How do we practice reading the Bible not just for information but to hear from God? Throughout the history of Christianity, believers have practiced various forms of intentional reading, slowing down and reading small bits over and over. This allows our thoughts to slow, for us to savor each Word, and create space for the miraculous process of God enlivening our souls. John Wesley called this "Spiritual Reading." Here is a basic guide to formational reading, training our ears to hear (taken from An Introductory Guide to Listening Prayer by Robert Japenga):

1. Select a portion of Scripture (not more than ten verses). Maybe choose a portion of a Psalm or go along with our Sunday morning reading.
2. Ask God to speak to you through this passage.
3. Read the passage through one or two times very slowly. As you read, ask God to highlight one thought or one word to you as you read. Sometimes, it is helpful to write the passage out in full. Write this down in a prayer journal as well as the word or thought that came to you.
4. Read the passage again slowly, asking God to show you how your life is touched by this passage. Again, record your thoughts in a prayer journal.
5. Read the whole passage at least one more time. This time, ask God to show you if there is an invitation for you in this passage. Again, record your question and what you believe God may be showing you in a prayer journal.
6. Using the Scriptures as a springboard, pray about whatever God has brought to mind. The prayer could be for you, for others, or for a situation. It could be a petitionary prayer (i.e. asking God for something), an intercessory prayer (i.e. standing in the gap for another person), a prayer of confession, a prayer of thanksgiving, or even just a cry for help.

RESOURCES

There is an art and science to reading the Bible. Christians can cultivate a stronger appetite for God's Word by building familiarity with the Scriptures and those things that make it special. This title is one among many great books in the area known as Biblical Hermeneutics. Also a favorite word of mine. :)

[Reading the Bible Wisely: An Introduction to Taking Scripture Seriously. Revised Edition. By Richard S. Briggs. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011.](https://www.amazon.com/Reading-Bible-Wisely-Introduction-Seriously/dp/1610972880)
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<https://cccm.com/teaching/jesus-christ-son-of-god-savior/video/kingdom-parables/>