

**Parable of the Growing Seed**

26 Jesus also said, "The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. 27 Night and day, while he's asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. 28 The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. 29 And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come."

**Parable of the Mustard Seed**

30 Jesus said, "How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it? 31 It is like a mustard seed planted in the ground. It is the smallest of all seeds, 32 but it becomes the largest of all garden plants; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade."

33 Jesus used many similar stories and illustrations to teach the people as much as they could understand. 34 In fact, in his public ministry he never taught without using parables; but afterward, when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.

Mark 4:26-34 (NLT)

**Observation** (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

**Discussion/Topic Starters** (Ice Breakers)

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- O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

**V26-29**

- O: Jesus likened the growth of the Kingdom of God to the slow, sometimes invisible, growth of a seed. How does this differ from what the Jewish people in Jesus' day were expecting?
- O: What is the role of the farmer in the kingdom of God? Who does the farmer represent? What role does the farmer not play in this parable?
- I: Compare Mark 4:28 with I Cor:3:6-7. In your own words, what is our job? What is God's job?
- I: How does this parable complement the parable found in v.3-20?
- I: What is the significance of the farmer sowing seed and not knowing how it grows in relation to the coming of God's kingdom?
- A: What encouragement to you find in this parable? How is it applicable to your everyday life?

**V30-32**

- O: What aspect of God's kingdom does the mustard seed parable emphasize?
- I: What does the contrast between the small seed and huge plant teach us about the kingdom of God?
- I: How did this parable play out in the lives of Jesus' first disciples in the Bible?
- I: The gospel of Mark was written to persecuted Christians in Rome. How might this parable have encouraged them? How can it encourage &/or spur us on as well?
- A: What evidence of growth have you seen in your life the last year?

**V33-34**

- I: Why do you think Jesus spoke only in parable to the crowds at this point in His ministry?
- A: What does v.33-34 teach that might help you in sharing the gospel with non-Christian friends?

**Recommended Follow-up:**

- **Pray:** Thank God that you can participate in His kingdom. Seek in prayer how you can help "scatter seed" in regards to the Kingdom.
- **Respond:** reread through these parables throughout the week. Reflect (even write down) how these kingdom parables can play out in your normal, everyday life.
- **Read:** Next week's sermon (7/18/2010) will focus on Mark 4:35-41. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the passage, pray through the passage, meditate on the passage, etc.

\* As discussed in Riverside's HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid "go through this guide word-for-word." There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time. These guides rely heavily on a few different study guides; including "LifeChange Series" (ISBN 0891099107), N.T. Wright's guide (ISBN 9780830821822), James Hoover's guide (ISBN 9780830830046), and the Serendipity NT for Groups by the Young Life ministry (ISBN is N/A)