

Chapter 7

Relationship with Others: How Can We Share Jesus?

Opening Question: What comes to your mind when you think about sharing the story of Jesus with others?

DEBRIEF and OPENING

Have group members share how they did with last week's "Respond" step (Service to others with our gifts) and repeat the memory verse (Mark 10:45) as they arrive. Ask about what they wrote down as opportunities or dreams for how and where they can use their gifts after they graduate.

Open with prayer for the Spirit to illuminate the group during the study.

HEAR THE WORD

Last week we began our series on relationships with others by looking at Jesus who came not to be served but to serve and give his life so that we could be set free from sin and its results. This week we will consider how we can share this good news about Jesus with others.

Context: Jesus gave us several images of how the Kingdom of God brings change. One of his favorite images was farming. In this chapter, we will see what farming can teach us about sharing Jesus with others. The author of this chapter learned these lessons through her own experiences sharing the Lord with her parents.

As we saw in Chapter 5, a biblical parable is a short story told to illuminate a relevant truth. In Mark 4, Jesus told three parables explaining what the kingdom of God is like: the parable of the sower, the parable of the growing seed (our text), and the parable of the mustard seed. The parable of the sower identifies the seed as the word.

Mark 4:26-29 (NIV)

²⁶ He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

Context: 1 Corinthians is one of the letters from the early Christian preacher Paul to the church of Corinth. In this letter, Paul addressed many issues that the Corinthian church was facing. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul teaches the church that it is foolish to glorify men and religious leaders, for all of them are equal servants in God's ministry. Paul had founded the church, but Apollos later taught there. The Corinthians were dividing themselves based on loyalty to human beings, even going so far as saying "I belong to Paul" or "I belong to Apollos" (1 Corinthians 1:12).

1 Corinthians 3:1-9 (NIV)

Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. ³You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? ⁴For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings? ⁵What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. ⁹For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. According to Mark 4:26-29, what is the process of growing seeds like? Once the seed sprouts, what stages are there?
2. Look at 1 Corinthians 3. Who is Paul and who is Apollos? What did each do for the Corinthians? What did God do?
3. What are the similarities between these two passages?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

4. What do farmers do in farming? Who is truly making seeds grow? What do you think it means to spiritually "water" a field or plant?

5. What can the picture of sowing, watering and reaping teach us about sharing Jesus? What kind of character does a farmer need?

APPLY (What does the passage mean for me and my community?)

6. What can we learn from Jesus' frequent choice of story-telling (parables) to plant the seed of the word?
7. If you have not yet shared the gospel with your family or friends, what has kept you from doing so? How does knowing that God works slowly and it's not necessary to share everything at once encourage you to begin a planting process?
8. Prayerfully choose two family members or close friends who don't know Jesus personally. How can you prepare the soil of their hearts? What would be appropriate ways to plant seeds?
9. For reflection: How does this seed-planting and cultivating way of sharing Jesus compare with common ways of sharing the gospel or any good news in the country you live in now? In your home country?

Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 (NIV)

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

Write the verse in English and your heart language on an index card.

RESPOND

Practice: Praying for non-Christian family or friends

Research has shown that people who become followers of Jesus typically go through 5 stages or thresholds. What are these 5 thresholds? [5 Thresholds - Overview | twentyonehundred productions](#) or contextualized for ISM [Journeying toward Jesus](#); Although these videos depict the thresholds or stages as linear, they can be more

circular with people moving back and forth between them. But there are stages, and developing trust is very important

Prayerfully choose two family members or friends and ask the Holy Spirit to show you where your friends or families are in their faith journeys.

Once you think you have identified the stages your friends are in, pray for them and ask God to show you how you can assist them on the journey to the next stage.

CLOSING

Close in prayer for group member needs, for people to hear well from God about sharing Jesus, for any obstacles to planting seeds to be overcome, and the needs of the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Callie C. came to the United States from an Asian country as an international student. Through a local InterVarsity International Christian Fellowship chapter, she became a Christian. Her understanding of the lives of international students gave her a strong desire to see many more of them experience Jesus' love and guidance. In 2017, she became a campus minister with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and planted an international student chapter at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Callie learned these lessons about sharing with family and friends as she shared Jesus with her parents. She and her husband, who is also an immigrant, have 3 children. Milka Hanook, a campus minister from Pakistan working in Cleveland, Ohio, commented on this study.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Chapter

Help students understand the following truths:

- Realize Jesus has called us to share the Gospel even though he knew it would not be easy.
- Sharing the gospel is done by following God's leading. Trusting that God is at work, we are invited to participate in his plan. Focus on God's guidance and know that it is not us who changes hearts but the Holy Spirit.
- Be patient with others, love them with the kind of love you have received from God, with no judgment or pushiness, but trusting in God's guidance and timing.
- Help members to know that the gospel is alive, and our lives as believers are meant to live it out not just speak it out.

Notes on the Questions:

Question 1: There is mystery in the growth of a seed, but stages can be discerned before the seed is ready to harvest: soil preparation, sowing the seed, waiting, seeing the stalk, then the head, then the grain. It is a process!

Question 3: In both cases there is the sowing of seed, the varying quality of soil that the seed falls on, and the fact that God is the one who causes growth.

Question 4: There is mystery; we don't know for sure what makes the seeds pop up. God causes the growth; the farmer creates the right conditions. "Watering" can include demonstrating our faith, praying for the person or sharing more details about Jesus and how he has changed our lives.

Question 5. Farmers need patience and a willingness to work hard and to take risks. They do not give up easily, and the more they farm, the more they understand how to cooperate with the soil, the seed, irrigation, and so on.

Question 6: Stories invite interest and further seeking without telling people what to do. Jesus used them both to discover who was truly seeking (this chapter) and to indirectly invite the teachers of the Law to more deeply understand God's love (Luke 15). Some international students have used storytelling to share Jesus with others, including family. Storytelling is culturally appropriate for many cultures.

Question 8: Help group members to identify barriers in their lives that stop them from sharing Jesus with others, such as fear of rejection, not believing in God's power to change hearts, or fear of losing a friendship. Knowing that the work is God's should

take the pressure off us. All we do is pray, listen to God for his planting and watering instructions and continue praying.