

# **SOWING THE SEED**

#### Read Luke 8:1-15

This isn't the 'Parable of the Sower' as the NIV suggests, but is really a parable about 'soils'. "The seed is the word of God" (v. 11) which is sown by "proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God" (v. 1).

1. What does the good soil do that's different to the other soils? (v15)

2. What 'testing' in your life could stop growth happening for you? (v13)

3. What are the worries, riches or pleasures in your life that inhibit your growth? (v14)

Jesus said everyone needs to grow, or they'll die. And the only way they'll grow is by hearing the word that Jesus preached, the gospel, and holding on to it until it produces fruit in their lives, changing how they think and act. And this growth through the word of the gospel wasn't just for his first followers either...

#### Luke 8:1-15

- <sup>1</sup> After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God...
- <sup>4</sup> While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: 5 "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. 6 Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown."

When he said this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." <sup>9</sup> His disciples asked him what this parable meant. <sup>10</sup> He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,

- "though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand."
- 11 "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13 Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. 14 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. 15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

# **BUILDING THE BODY**

### Ephesians 4:11-16

<sup>11</sup>So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

## Read Ephesians 4:11-16

Paul says that when Jesus rose from the dead He was like a triumphant Roman General returning from battle with the spoils of war, generously distributing them to His people.

4. What do the gifts of the risen Lord (v11) have in common?

5. What are the goals of these gifts to the church? (v12-13)

#### The Gifts Distributed

**Prophets:** Those moved by the Spirit to speak words from God to strengthen, encourage and comfort (1 Cor 14:3)

**Apostles:** Those sent by Jesus to proclaim their testimony about his resurrection (Acts 1:22)

**Evangelists:** Those especially gifted to proclaim the 'eu-angelion' (good news, gospel) about Jesus (Philip in Acts 8:5, 21:8)

Pastor-Teachers: Those gifted to shepherd God's people by teaching God's word (1 Timothy 3:2) The gift Jesus gives to his church is people who proclaim God's word! People speaking God's word to people IS the way God builds up the body to maturity.

6. The phrase 'works of service' in v12 is equally well translated 'works of ministry.' According to these verses, who does the 'ministry' in a church, and who 'prepares' them for this?

7. What does "speaking the truth in love" mean (v15)? What else is needed for growth apart from just the "truth"? (v13,16)

8.	What things will characterise an immature church where people are not
	using their gifts to build one another up in the truth about Jesus (v14)?

9. What things will characterise a church where people are using their gifts to build one another up in the truth about Jesus (v15-16)?

# **GROWING TOGETHER**

Our MPC teaching team, growth group leaders, kids ministry leaders. and youth leaders and our music teams are committed to seeing us grow more like Jesus together! Consider the questions under the three categories below:

### **MEETING**

10. As a member of a growth group, what practical steps can you take to encourage one another to **grow more like Jesus together?** (e.g. Regular attendance; Reading and reflecting on the Bible passage beforehand; Enabling and inviting people to ask any question; Asking each other about your growth through the year; Praying for each other through the week.)

# **SINGING** (see sidebar)

- 11. If you were selecting songs to sing in church, how would our 'grow goal' help you in the process? Think of some:
  - Criteria for choosing songs?
  - Principles for playing music?

# Singing the Word

<sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### Ephesians 5:18-20

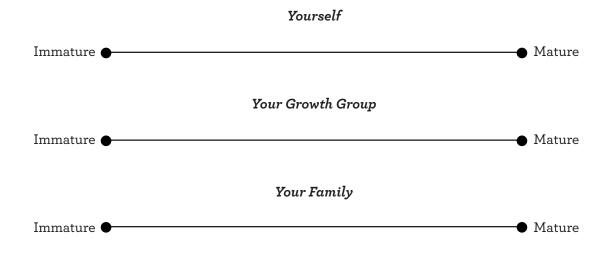
One of the key ways Christians speak the truth in love to each other is through singing about Jesus. Being filled with the Spirit is marked, not by a lack of control, but by singing songs with good intent! When Christians gather our singing is to be directed two ways - to one another, and then together to the Lord. And the content of our songs should be biblically true (psalms, hymns, from the Spirit) as well as with a consistent note of thankfulness (giving thanks to God the Father for everything).

## **PRAYING**

12. Prayer expresses our dependence on God. Prayer is our response to God's word. And God's word should shape our prayer - what we pray for and how we pray for it. How can we ensure that prayer is an essential part of our lives and the life of the church family? (e.g. daily personal prayer, prayer in Growth Groups, prayer triplets, etc.)

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

13. Push the pause button on life and take stock. Where would you mark the 'Christ-likeness of:



14. What will you prioritise and commit to this year in order to grow as a follower of Jesus? (e.g. daily prayer, intentional evangelism, daily Bible reading, attend Growth Group regularly, family Bible time, etc.) Write it down...

Our Big Four words are **Invite, Grow, Love and Send.** And yet we recognise that the fruit of all these things depends on God, who extends the invitation and gives the growth and moves us to love by His Spirit and sends us on mission. Spend some time praying that God by his Spirit would use his word to **grow us more like Jesus** together.