

SAC Small Groups Discussion Guide – June 1st, 2025

This guide comes with the expectation that even if someone has missed the Sunday service, they have watched the sermon before coming to their small group.

Fellowship Time

Make sure to have time where people can chat and catch up. This section could include a dinner together, having a potluck, preparing snacks, etc. The key to this section is make people feel welcomed and seen.

Read this Overview Aloud Together

This section contains a brief summary of the sermon that was preached on Sunday. It will have the main point explained as a way to help those remember the sermon. This is not an in-depth overview because the expectation is that everyone will take the time to listen to the sermon.

As we head into the summer months, we will be pivoting to a new series, Stories of Jesus. Our hope as a church family is to dive into the life and teachings of Jesus and to be captivated by his life in a way that leads us into deeper worship and praise of Him. This week we found ourselves in Matthew 13:1-23 where Jesus teaches the parable of the sower. Jesus in Matthew 11 & 12 has been teaching the crowds with mixed reactions coming forward: some are accepting, neutral and rejecting his message. Jesus teaches this parable in part to bring illumination to the responses he has been receiving.

The parables Jesus taught were different than a standard parable because they taught about the Kingdom of God and challenged people's perspectives about life. His parables often left people with more questions than answers. In this story, Jesus gets up and teaches a crowd listening to him from a boat. Jesus shares this parable of a sower casting out seed into a field. In the field, there are four types of soil: a hard path, shallow soil, soil filled with thorns, and good soil that produces harvest. The disciples are confused because Jesus' teachings are difficult to understand.

Jesus explains that he teaches with parables to reveal about the Kingdom of God and how it will come about. As well, people's response to his parables acts as a lens into the heart of the listener and whether they are receiving the message of the Kingdom or not. If they did understand his message, God would bring healing and life into their lives. He then explains that the parable of the sower is really about people's hearts and how they respond to the message. The seed (the Gospel) on the path is like someone who has a hard heart. The seed on the shallow soil is someone who receives the message with joy, but persecution causes them to fall away. The seed in the thorns is someone who has the message, but then worry and wealth chokes out the fruit. Lastly, the seed in good soil is someone who receives the Gospel, it takes root, and leads to harvest/fruit. In the parable, the fruit is a life transformed by the Kingdom of God.

Discussion Questions

These questions are prompts to help the group have meaningful dialogue over the sermon this past weekend. Do not feel the need to ask all these questions. You are more than welcome to create your own questions or mix the questions together.

- Do you have any questions or thoughts about the passage or sermon from this week?
- What do you find the most inspiring/captivating about Jesus?
- Why did Jesus use parables to teach? How does this inform our witness to those who do not know Jesus?
- Which of the four types of soil do you feel like represents your heart? Has that changed over time for you or not?
- In the sermon, Dallas Willard was quoted by writing, "Jesus didn't say the heart never changes". Who are the people in your life that you desire to see their heart change?

Reflect and Discuss the Practice and Prayer.

This is an opportunity for accountability and formation in your group. Accountability to ensure people are practicing the practices and formation because we believe that these practices will shape and form us into the people that God intended us to be. Take time to reflect on each person's experience of these practices.

Practice: Three steps to witness more effectively to those who do not know Jesus and His Kingdom. Focus on one step to grow in this next week.

1. Pray for them (and ourselves) that our heart would change.
2. Continue to sow the seed (the message of the Kingdom) in our lives and the lives of others.
3. View questions as opportunities for growth. The disciples asked lots of questions to seek clarity and understanding.

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for bringing the Kingdom of God to us. Thank you for the message of hope, love, and unity in the Kingdom. May our hearts be receptive to the Gospel. If our hearts are hard, shallow, or have competing forces in them, may you remove what needs to be removed. May we as a church have a posture of openness and surrender to your presence God in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray this in your name Jesus, Amen.

End in Prayer

Take some time to pray with each other. This is not a time for gossip or to be cynical, this is an opportunity to share with each other our burdens, to celebrate and praise God together, and to pray expectantly that God would move.