

Growing In Fruitfulness

FF08

Bible Verses: Matthew 13: 3-8 & 18-30, John 15:1-8, John 15:5, Philippians 1:3-6.

To give the young people the tools to keep growing in fruitfulness on their daily frontlines.

Leader's notes

Matthew Chapter 13 (The Message)

3-8 "What do you make of this? A farmer planted seed. As he scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road, and birds ate it. Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn't put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled by the weeds. Some fell on good earth, and produced a harvest beyond his wildest dreams.

The Meaning of the Harvest Story

18-19 "Study this story of the farmer planting seed. When anyone hears news of the kingdom and doesn't take it in, it just remains on the surface, and so the Evil One comes along and plucks it right out of that person's heart. This is the seed the farmer scatters on the road.

20-21 "The seed cast in the gravel—this is the person who hears and instantly responds with enthusiasm. But there is no soil of character, and so when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it.

22 "The seed cast in the weeds is the person who hears the kingdom news, but weeds of worry and illusions about getting more and wanting everything under the sun strangle what was heard, and nothing comes of it.

23 "The seed cast on good earth is the person who hears and takes in the News, and then produces a harvest beyond his wildest dreams."

24-26 He told another story. "God's kingdom is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. That night, while his hired men were asleep, his enemy sowed thistles all through the wheat and slipped away before dawn. When the first green shoots appeared and the grain began to form, the thistles showed up, too.

27 "The farmhands came to the farmer and said, 'Master, that was clean seed you planted, wasn't it? Where did these thistles come from?'

28 "He answered, 'Some enemy did this.'

"The farmhands asked, 'Should we weed out the thistles?'

29-30 "He said, 'No, if you weed the thistles, you'll pull up the wheat, too. Let them grow together until harvest time. Then I'll instruct the harvesters to pull up the thistles and tie them in bundles for the fire, then gather the wheat and put it in the barn.'"

Today's session is about how to help the young people you work with to sustain their fruitfulness on their frontline. Not just to simply sustain it, but to help them grow, to make them more fruitful. It seemed only fitting to start with the 'Parable of the Sower' as an introduction to the last session of this series. But why?

Well, to me this sums up what our aim should be as we support the young people we work with. We should be helping them to be the good seed and to grow to be the best that they can be. Realistically of course, there will be times when weeds grow up around – people get in the way of their relationship with God, which will affect their fruitfulness. At times like these we need to be ready to help them to get free of these weeds, these people who don't want the best for their lives in order for them to grow.

In verses 18-30 Jesus reinforces to us that the way is not easy. The devil will try to thwart our attempts to help these young people grow in Christ and will try to stop them being fruitful on their frontline and showing others love and kindness and ultimately from sharing their faith.

The enemy will try dirty tricks and will sow thistles to grow amongst the good seeds, to take all the goodness out of the soil and steal the nutrients from the good seeds trying to grow. But Christ is bigger than this, and like the farmer, He calls us to live amongst the thistles; to grow amongst them and alongside them, but to be set apart from them; to seek our sustenance from Christ rather than the world. As Mark Greene eloquently sums up:

'...all forms of fruitfulness have their source in Christ, the vine, and in the sovereign tending of the Father. And all forms of fruitfulness ultimately will bring glory to his name and contribute to others seeing a clearer and clearer picture of who he is. Praise God for that.' (p188)

Seed To Tree

Getting Started

15 mins



Visual And Audio Clips

Show a short clip of a time lapse video that shows a seed growing into a tree or plant. You can find one of these by going to YouTube and typing 'acorn to oak tree time lapse' into the search engine. The clip lasts for just over 2 minutes.

When you have watched the clip, discuss with the group what the acorn needed in order to help it to grow into the oak tree. (Water, good soil, nutrients, sun, protection etc.)

Explain that the same is for us as we seek to grow more fruitful on our frontlines; we need a certain mix of things to help us to do this and to help us to grow in Christ.

Today's session is all about what they need in order to grow in fruitfulness on the frontlines so that they can continue to serve God.

The Point: To introduce the topic of the session through a video clip to help them to think about what they are going to be learning about.


Equipment

The means to show the clip below.

Thank God For Our Frontlines

Digging In

15 mins

 Bible Study

Read the story of Judith from Mark Greene's book 'Fruitfulness On The Frontline'. The story starts on p187 with the sentence '*It was Monday morning*' and finishes on p188 with the sentence '*A privilege really, an honour.*'

Discuss with the group:

Have they ever had days where everything seems to be going wrong and it is all too much hard work? What did they do?

Do they thank God when things are hard, or grumble at how difficult things are? Why/why not?

What do they think about Judith's story and how she thanked God for the honour of serving on her frontline, and trusting God to help her when things were simply too hard?

Can they see themselves doing this?

Display the following Bible passage so that everyone can read it:

'Every time you cross my mind, I break out in exclamations of thanks to God. Each exclamation is a trigger to prayer. I find myself praying for you with a glad heart. I am so pleased that you have continued on in this with us, believing and proclaiming God's Message, from the day you heard it right up to the present. There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears.'

Philippians 1:3-6 (The Message)

Explain that this is from the letter that Paul wrote to the Philippians, to encourage them to remain being fruitful and close to God in all that they do. It is relevant to us as we seek to maintain a close relationship with God so that we too can remain being fruitful on our frontlines.

There will be times when it is hard work, times when it is a joy, but through the joys and struggles if we stay firmly rooted and grounded in Christ, we will continue to grow in fruitfulness.

But how do we do this? Through praying to God which enables us to speak and listen to Him, through reading God's word in the Bible, from being with other Christians so that we can learn from each other and support each other. And from worshipping our Almighty Heavenly Father who cares about every tiny bit of our lives.

The Point: *To use the story of someone who has seen trials and successes on their frontline, as an example for us.*

Equipment

A copy of Mark Greene's book 'Fruitfulness On The Frontline' and the means to display the Bible passage below.

Fruitful Living

Response

5 mins

✝️ Worship and Reflection

Invite the young people to find a space in the room to sit on their own.

Play them the song 'Awake and Alive' by the Christian band 'Skillet' and ask them to listen to the words and spend time reflecting upon the challenges they face on their frontline and trying to maintain fruitfulness on it.

If you don't have a copy of this song, you can find one on YouTube, some of the clips have the words displayed also if you think that this would help your group to focus.

When the song has finished read the following quote (Mark Greene, p201) to the group as a prayer:

'God is at work. And God has been at work in his people, in his church, in this land. And, no doubt, in you, in a myriad ways. We may not get to see the outcomes in our lifetimes, but it is so.'

And so, the Lord be with you, whatever hat you wear.

The Lord be with you on your frontline.

The Lord – the King of Glory, the Shield of David, the Friend of Sinners, the Redeemer of All, the Sovereign of Time, the Fount of all Wisdom, the Source of all Power, the Spring of all Love – be with you.'

Amen.

The Point: To encourage the group to reflect upon the session and worship God.

Equipment

A copy of the song 'Awake and Alive' by the Christian band 'Skillet' and the means to play it.
