



Part 7: How the Kingdom of God Grows

Note: We have provided you with more questions than you will likely need. Please don't feel pressure to talk about every question. Use the ones that you feel will be most useful in generating discussion in your group.

Ask

This week's conversation is all about spiritual growth. What are some habits (i.e. personal Bible study, community, etc.) or major life experiences (conferences, mission trips, etc.) that have been significant contributors to your spiritual growth?

Hear

Ask

- Pastor Lance said that spiritual growth is both practical and spiritual. What are some practical benefits of spiritual growth that you have seen in your life?

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Examples:

When I'm connected with the Lord and actively growing, I find myself more motivated to do my work with excellence because I view it as work I'm doing for His glory.

When I'm connected with the Lord and actively growing, I find that I'm able to have more peace when life gets stressful.

- Pastor Lance also said that fear is not a good motivator for spiritual growth. Why do you think fear is so often used as a motivator in spiritual environments? Do you ever find yourself motivated by fear? What are some healthier motivators we can use? *Leader's note: You may want to ask these questions one at a time instead of all three at once.*

Play

Watch the first video clip that is on www.bridgeway.church/litk.

Ask

- Pastor Lance said that Christianity is not about performance, but it's about awareness. What are some practical ways to maintain an awareness of God's presence outside of church, Bible study, etc.?
- What are some situations and circumstances that tend to knock you out of alignment? What are healthy strategies you can use to realign?
- We know that it's not possible to go through life with an 'empty' bucket for God to fill. Each of us has responsibilities and demands that take up our time and attention. What are some practical ways we can guard against letting the busyness of life crowd God out?

Read

Read Mark 4:26-32, The Parable of the Growing Seed & The Parable of the Mustard Seed

"And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The

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earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.

“And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

Ask

- What do these parables teach us about the process of spiritual growth?
- This passage teaches us that spiritual growth is a slow and steady process. This can be frustrating in a culture where it seems that everything else moves so quickly. Looking at your own life or the lives of people you know, where have you seen evidence of God’s slow, steady growth? *Leader’s note: It is generally easier to see spiritual growth in others. If your group knows each other well, this can be a time for you to point and celebrate the growth you have seen in one another. If you don’t know each other well enough yet, you can share stories of others you know.*
- What are the benefits of the slow pace of spiritual growth?

Apply

Say

Pastor Lance said that one of the ways we can stay in alignment with God’s Spirit is the use of spiritual disciplines. He specifically mentioned fasting, solitude, and silence.

Here are some brief definitions:

Fasting- Going without food for a period of time (a meal, a full day, etc.) to allow our physical hunger to remind us of our spiritual hunger and our need for God’s sustaining grace.

Solitude- Intentionally getting away from the noise of life for a period of time (an hour, a day, a weekend, etc.) so that we can engage with God in an undistracted manner.

Silence- Sitting without books, television, music, or other sources of noise and information so that we can listen for God's voice.

Ask

- What kind of experience, if any, do you have with any of these spiritual disciplines? What questions do you have about them? What other spiritual disciplines are helpful for you?
- What does intentional spiritual growth look like for you in this season?

Close

On Wednesday, October 9th, Bridgeway will be starting our annual 40-day fast. During this season we invite everyone in the Bridgeway family to voluntarily fast from something for the purpose of pursuing God in a more focused manner. We also invite the Bridgeway family to fast from food for a meal or for the whole day (health-permitting) each Wednesday. Take some time to split into groups of four or less and share how you will be engaging in the 40-day fast.

Leader's note: Be sure that people in your group know that fasting from something is not a "requirement", and if they'd rather not share what they are fasting from, that's fine, too. In your smaller groups, spend a few moments praying for each other, specifically that you would each encounter God in a new and fresh way in this season of fasting and prayer.