



## DECEMBER 2009 TEACHING PLANS

**YOU HAVEN'T MADE IT THIS FAR IN LIFE** without encountering your fair share of stress. Between figuring out how to pay for college, juggling class assignments and work commitments, dealing with roommates and social obligations, and somehow trying to squeeze in more than a few hours of sleep a night, college life can feel like one big stressful endurance test.

The good news is, the Bible provides some excellent advice for living in stressful times. Throughout the Book of Mark are guidelines you can use to make it through another day, another week, another semester. And by putting these principles into practice, you won't just be surviving — you'll be living a life worthy of your calling as a Christian. So what's going to be covered over the next few months?

During the first month, we'll look at the ways Jesus answers our questions. *How can Jesus help me in life? What does it mean to follow Him? Why did Jesus come? Is God still working in the world?* Then, we'll study some of the ways Jesus can meet our needs — by giving us courage, helping our faith grow, enabling us to get along with others, and allowing us to be successful according to His standards. Finally, we'll look at some scenarios in which Jesus helps us face our problems — when our priorities are challenged, when we feel overwhelmed, when we're facing difficult decisions, and when life is unfair.

So have at it. Dig in. See what God is teaching you through the Book of Mark, and see how it applies to your life right now. In the midst of all the chaos, Jesus is the constant. He's been there before and can guide you through whatever tough times you're facing. And with that kind of resource at your fingertips, stressful times don't stand a chance.

**WHAT'S INSIDE . . .** The goal of the *Collegiate* online features is to bring you a structured teaching plan with additional helps and relevant questions to equip you to lead a strong discussion-based lesson. Here's a breakdown of what's inside: *Getting Started* helps introduce the topic and get your students engaged in the lesson. *Need to Knows* provides the lesson overview and key verses of each lesson. *Explore the Bible* leads your students through the Scripture passages of the lesson, helping them understand the text, its historical and cultural context, and what it means to them today. *Apply to Life* gives you ideas for furthering the application of the Scripture, so students can take active steps to process what they're learning and how it impacts their lives. Be sure you also utilize the commentary provided ([threadsmedia.com/collegiate](http://threadsmedia.com/collegiate)) to help with your preparation and personal study of the lessons. As always, we're here for you. Please send us your questions, thoughts, and suggestions. Let us know what we could do better and how these teaching plans could be even more relevant to your students and your ministry.

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## THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 28 OF THE WINTER ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "WAKE UP OH SLEEPER" BY JASON CRABB, JONATHAN SHELTON, AND BEAR RINEHART, FROM THE ALBUM *GLORY REVEALED II*.

## NEED TO KNOWS

### LESSON OVERVIEW

This session is about Jesus' first preaching and His early ministry in Capernaum. It encourages college students to always allow Jesus to lead in their lives.

### FOCAL PASSAGES

MARK 1:14-31



## BIG RESULTS: DISCOVERING MORE THAN WE EXPECTED

### GETTING STARTED

Have the song "Wake Up Oh Sleeper" by Jason Crabb, Jonathan Shelton, and Bear Rinehart playing in the background as students arrive.

*Note: You can download the complete Winter 2009–10 Collegiate iMix at once. Just go to the iTunes Music store to view the playlist and purchase the songs to play for your group.*

Name the people, circumstances, and so forth you think of when you hear the word "revolution."

- Why do revolutions start?
- What's your general feeling toward revolutionaries?
- How does a society usually react to someone who encourages revolution?
- How do we distinguish healthy revolution from unhealthy revolution?

When Jesus came and introduced His mission to the world, He ushered in a revolution. This week we'll be looking at ways Jesus' revolution helps us in terms of salvation, leadership, freedom, and service.

### DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 28 in the Winter issue of *Collegiate* magazine for a related quote and additional info.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the session on page 28 of the Winter 2009–10 *Collegiate* magazine.

## 1). MIGHTY TO SAVE (MARK 1:14-15)

### READ MARK 1:14-15.

<sup>14</sup>After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee, preaching the good news of God: <sup>15</sup>“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the good news!”

Have someone read “Mighty to Save” on page 28 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- In what ways could you consider the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry “revolutionary”?
- What was the purpose of Jesus’ earthly mission?
- What does it mean to you that “the kingdom of God has come near”?
- What difference does it make in your life to know that this “good news” exists?

Jesus didn’t hesitate to spread the word about salvation, but we’re so often cautious about sharing God’s good news with other people.

- Why do you think that is?
- If we really believe the good news of God is as good as He says it is, what keeps us from telling other people about it?
- Would we be as hesitant to tell others about a cure for cancer or AIDS? What’s the difference?

When Jesus came to earth, He brought the kingdom of God near to the people, and He called the people He encountered to follow Him.

## 2). FOLLOWING THE LEADER (MARK 1:16-20)

### READ MARK 1:16-20.

<sup>16</sup>As He was passing along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, Simon’s brother. They were casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>“Follow Me,” Jesus told them, “and I will make you fish for people!” <sup>18</sup>Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. <sup>19</sup>Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in their boat mending their nets. <sup>20</sup>Immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed Him.

Ask a volunteer to read “Following the Leader” on page 28 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- What difference does viewing Christian life in terms of joining God’s mission (as opposed to God “being on our side”) make in everyday life?
- What have you given up to follow Jesus? Has it been worth it?

*Facilitator’s Note:* Connect the dots with another passage ...

### REVIEW THE GREAT COMMISSION (MATTHEW 28:16-20).

<sup>16</sup>The 11 disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup>When they saw Him, they worshiped, but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- What does it mean that every Christian is a missionary? Is every believer supposed to be in full-time ministry?
- How is being a disciple in 21st-century America different from being a disciple in 1st-century Palestine?

As followers of Jesus, we’re free in Christ. But the freedom Jesus offers isn’t necessarily what we’d expect. Freedom in Christ is primarily spiritual, not physical.

## 3). LET FREEDOM RING! (MARK 1:21-28)

### READ MARK 1:21-28.

<sup>21</sup>Then they went into Capernaum, and right away He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to teach. <sup>22</sup>They were astonished at His teaching because, unlike the scribes, He was teaching them as one having authority. <sup>23</sup>Just then a man with an unclean spirit was in their synagogue. He cried out, <sup>24</sup>“What do You have to do with us, Jesus—Nazarene? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” <sup>25</sup>But Jesus rebuked him and said, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” <sup>26</sup>And the unclean spirit convulsed him, shouted with a loud voice, and came out of him. <sup>27</sup>Then they were all amazed, so they began to argue with one another, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” <sup>28</sup>His fame then spread throughout the entire vicinity of Galilee.

Have someone read “Let Freedom Ring!” on page 28 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- Have you ever experienced any sort of spiritual oppression? How did you deal with it?
- What are ways we can combat Satan’s influence in our lives?
- How would you characterize the freedom Jesus gives us?

*Facilitator’s Note:* Connect the dots with another passage ...

### READ LUKE 4:17-19.

<sup>17</sup>The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Him, and unrolling the scroll, He found the place where it was written: <sup>18</sup>The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He

has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

- What kind of “good news to the poor” and “freedom to the captives” is Luke talking about here?

**ALSO READ 1 CORINTHIANS 7:20-22.**

<sup>20</sup>Each person should remain in the life situation in which he was called. <sup>21</sup>Were you called while a slave? It should not be a concern to you. But if you can become free, by all means take the opportunity. <sup>22</sup>For he who is called by the Lord as a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called as a free man is Christ's slave.

- How does this passage relate to slavery and liberation?

Once we understand the “good news” Jesus brings, and what it looks like on earth, we are better enabled to serve God and join Him in His mission. But even the most zealous servants of God encounter obstacles to their service.

#### 4). MOVING MOUNTAINS (MARK 1:29-31)

**READ MARK 1:29-31.**

<sup>29</sup>As soon as they left the synagogue, they went into Simon and Andrew's house with James and John.

<sup>30</sup>Simon's mother-in-law was lying in bed with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. <sup>31</sup>So He went to her, took her by the hand, and raised her up. The fever left her, and she began to serve them.

Ask a volunteer to read “Moving Mountains” on page 29 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- Does God still perform miracles like the ones He did in the New Testament?
- What does it mean when God doesn't remove an obstacle in our lives?
- Has Jesus enabled you to serve Him in any unusual, particular, or surprising way this week?



## THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 30 OF THE WINTER ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "NOT MY WILL BUT YOURS" BY DAVE HUNT, FROM THE ALBUM *LOVE ABOUNDS*.
- THE CLIP "BELLA - EDUARDO'S TESTIMONY" (3:43) OF ACTOR EDUARDO VERÁSTEGUI FROM *WINGCLIPS.COM* TO USE AT THE END OF THE SESSION.

## NEED TO KNOWS

### LESSON OVERVIEW

This session is about conflicts Jesus had with scribes and Pharisees over associating with sinners, fasting, and working on the Sabbath. The emphasis is on what Jesus' call to follow Him means for believers.

### FOCAL PASSAGES

MARK 2:15-28



## REDEEMED FOR A PURPOSE: UNDERSTANDING OUR CALLING

### GETTING STARTED

Have the song "Not My Will but Yours" by Dave Hunt playing in the background as students arrive.

**OPTION 1:** The 19th-century poet and novelist Oscar Wilde, who wrote *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, once remarked that "Looking good and dressing well is a necessity. Having a purpose in life is not."<sup>1</sup>

- How would the people you know describe their purpose in life?

In the Book of Mark, God gives us insight into what our purpose is as Christians. Instead of striving for wealth or fame or any of the many goals the world might value, Christians are called by God to reach out to other people — Christians and non-Christians, sinners and righteous alike. We're called to display a new kind of attitude and meet others' needs. Instead of living for ourselves, we live for others.

1. [http://thinkexist.com/quotation/looking\\_good\\_and\\_dressing\\_well\\_is\\_a\\_necessity/153871.html](http://thinkexist.com/quotation/looking_good_and_dressing_well_is_a_necessity/153871.html)

### DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 30 in the Winter issue of *Collegiate* magazine for a word study and additional info.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the session on page 30 of the Winter 2009–10 *Collegiate* magazine.

### 1). REACH OUT TO SINNERS (MARK 2:15-17)

#### READ MARK 2:15-17.

<sup>15</sup>While He was reclining at the table in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also guests with Jesus and His disciples, because there were many who were following Him. <sup>16</sup>When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they asked His disciples, "Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?" <sup>17</sup>When Jesus heard this, He told them, "Those who are well don't need a doctor, but the sick [do need one]. I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Have someone read "Reach Out to Sinners" on page 30 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- In what ways is Jesus' call a call to action?
- What kind of risk did Jesus take in eating with "sinners" at Matthew's dinner party?

In Jesus' day, tax collectors were at the bottom of the totem pole. They were the outcasts of society, they weren't allowed to be witnesses in a court trial, and they couldn't even enter the synagogue. Since the family played such a prominent role in Jewish society, even the tax collectors' families were shunned.<sup>2</sup>

- In our society, is there any group of people we view as "tax collectors and sinners"? Maybe we don't treat them quite as harshly as the tax collectors were treated, but is there anyone we prefer to keep at a distance?
- Why do we do this?

2. Adapted from the note on Mark 2:16 in the *New American Standard Study Bible*.

- How does it affect the way society views Christianity when we shun our "tax collectors"?
- How does this passage affect the way we treat homosexuals, or adulterers, or any other people with very visible sins?

If we're honest with ourselves, we all deserve to be rejected like the tax collectors in this passage. Even the tiniest sin is enough to separate us from God. But because Jesus came for the sick, we have the opportunity to be accepted. And when we're accepted, people should be able to see that we have a new kind of attitude.

### 2). LIVE WITH A NEW ATTITUDE (MARK 2:18-22)

#### READ MARK 2:18-22.

<sup>18</sup>Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. People came and asked Him, "Why do John's disciples and the Pharisees' disciples fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" <sup>19</sup>Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the groom is with them, can they? As long as they have the groom with them, they cannot fast. <sup>20</sup>But the time will come when the groom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. <sup>21</sup>No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new patch pulls away from the old cloth, and a worse tear is made. <sup>22</sup>And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost as well as the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins."

Ask a volunteer to read "Live with a New Attitude" on page 30 of *Collegiate* magazine.

In Jesus' day, fasting was associated with mourning or grief. And weddings were especially joyous times of feasts that could last as long as a week. Grief and mourning would have been out of place at a wedding celebration.<sup>3</sup>

3. Adapted from the note on Mark 2:19 in the *New American Standard Study Bible*.

- What does this passage communicate about the new attitude of Christians?
- What is your source of joy? What things have you encountered that try to sap joy out of the Christian life?
- Do you see any difference between happiness and joy?

*Facilitator's Note: Connect the dots with another passage ...*

#### READ GALATIANS 5:22-23.

<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.

- What's at stake if Christians don't exhibit these characteristics?

### 3). MEET OTHERS' NEEDS (MARK 2:23-28)

#### READ MARK 2:23-28.

<sup>23</sup>On the Sabbath He was going through the grainfields, and His disciples began to make their way picking some heads of grain. <sup>24</sup>The Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" <sup>25</sup>He said to them, "Have you never read what David and those who were with him did when he was in need and hungry; <sup>26</sup>how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest and ate the sacred bread—which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests—and also gave some to his companions?" <sup>27</sup>Then He told them, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup>Therefore the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Have someone read "Meet Others' Needs" on page 31 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- In this passage, what is the Pharisees' biggest concern?

- How did Jesus redirect the conversation?
- Today, in what ways do we let arbitrary rules take precedence over meeting others' needs?

In his book *unChristian*, which is based on interviews with non-Christians about how they view Christians, author David Kinnaman found that many non-Christians view Christians as “prideful and quick to find faults in others.”<sup>4</sup>

- Do you think his findings are accurate? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Christians are often characterized as judgmental?
- If the world sees us primarily as prideful and quick to find faults in people, who are we most like in the passages above?

4. David Kinnaman, *unChristian* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 181.



## THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 32 OF THE WINTER ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "SAVE ME" BY JJ HELLER, FROM THE ALBUM *PAINTED RED*.
- THE CLIP "LOUIE GIGLIO - LAMININ" AT [YOUTUBE.COM](http://YOUTUBE.COM).

## NEED TO KNOWS

### LESSON OVERVIEW

Jesus came into the world to offer us salvation, but we are accountable for how we respond to His coming.

### FOCAL PASSAGES

LUKE 2:8-15,25-35



## TRUTH FOR THE TAKING: DECIDING TO BELIEVE

### GETTING STARTED

Have the song "Save Me" by JJ Heller playing in the background as students arrive.

Discuss the reasons people give for not believing in Jesus.

- How often do you hear these kinds of views expressed on your campus (in your dorm, in a classroom, on a team, in a fraternity, etc.)? Give some examples.
- How important is it to be able to have satisfying answers to these kinds of difficulties?
- Did any of these reasons ring true to you before you became a Christian?
- What changed in order for you to trust that what the Bible says about Jesus is true?

Today's lesson focuses on what we know about Jesus and what we do with that knowledge.

### DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 32 in the Winter issue of *Collegiate* magazine for a related quote and additional info.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the session on page 32 of the Winter 2009–10 *Collegiate* magazine.

### 1). SEEK VERIFICATION (LUKE 2:8-15)

#### READ LUKE 2:8-15.

<sup>8</sup>In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: <sup>11</sup>today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David. <sup>12</sup>This will be the sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a manger.”

<sup>13</sup>Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: <sup>14</sup>Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors! <sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

Have someone read “Seek Verification” on page 32 of *Collegiate* magazine.

When the shepherds heard about Jesus’ birth, they sought verification.

- What lengths have you gone to in order to figure out what’s true about Jesus?
- Why is it important to verify the truth about Christianity?
- How common is it among people you know simply to accept what others have said about Jesus? What’s the danger in doing that?

- How would you characterize the “peace” the angels spoke of in verse 14? Is it something you’ve experienced in your own life? If so, what is it like?

Peace with God is available to those who put their faith in Jesus. Verification of the truth of the gospel can also be found through hearing the testimony of people who have trusted Jesus.

### 2). HEAR TESTIMONY (LUKE 2:25-32)

#### READ LUKE 2:25-32.

<sup>25</sup>There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel’s consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord’s Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple complex. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for Him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took Him up in his arms, praised God, and said:

<sup>29</sup>Now, Master, You can dismiss Your slave in peace, according to Your word. <sup>30</sup>For my eyes have seen Your salvation. <sup>31</sup>You have prepared it in the presence of all peoples—<sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to Your people Israel.

Ask a volunteer to read “Hear Testimony” on page 32 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- What does it mean that Simeon was “looking forward to Israel’s consolation” (v. 25)? What’s comparable to this for Christians?

This passage describes Simeon as “guided by the Holy Spirit” (v. 27). As he waited in expectation for the Messiah, God was with him and was guiding him.

- How do you know if you’re being guided by the Holy Spirit to do something or believe something?

- How did Simeon recognize that the baby named Jesus was God’s “salvation”?

The Bible Simeon had was the Old Testament, and it contains many messianic prophecies foreshadowing Jesus’ life.

*Facilitator’s Note: Connect the dots with other passages ...*

#### READ ISAIAH 7:14.

*Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.*

#### ALSO READ MICAH 5:2.

*Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; One will come from you to be ruler over Israel for Me. His origin is from antiquity, from eternity.*

- How do these two passages relate to the passage above about Simeon?

It’s important to know the truth about Jesus, but that’s not enough. This next passage explains why it’s necessary to make a personal choice about Jesus.

### 3). MAKE YOUR CHOICE (LUKE 2:33-35)

#### READ LUKE 2:33-35.

<sup>33</sup>His father and mother were amazed at what was being said about Him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and told His mother Mary: “Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed—<sup>35</sup>and a sword will pierce your own soul—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

Have someone read “Make Your Choice” at the bottom of page 32 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- **How can Jesus cause both the rise and fall of people?  
What does that mean?**

According to the New American Standard Study Bible, “Christ raises up those who believe in Him, but is a stumbling block for those who disbelieve.”

- **Why is it necessary to make a choice about whether or not to believe in Jesus?**



## THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 34 OF THE WINTER ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "LOVE CONSTRAINING TO OBEDIENCE" BY INDELIBLE GRACE MUSIC, FROM THE ALBUM *INDELIBLE GRACE SIDE A*.
- THE VIDEO CLIP "MOTHER TERESA – VOICE OF GOD" (1:33) FROM *WINGCLIPS.COM* UNDER "MISSION."

## NEED TO KNOWS

### LESSON OVERVIEW

God is active in the world today, working through His people and growing His kingdom. How can college students join in His work?

### FOCAL PASSAGES

MARK 4:14-32



## JOINING GOD AT WORK

### GETTING STARTED

Have the song "Love Constraining to Obedience" by Indelible Grace Music playing in the background as students arrive.

Is God still at work in our world?

- Give some examples that seem to indicate He *is* still at work.
- Give some examples that seem to indicate He *isn't* still at work.
- What makes it hard for us to be aware of God's work in the world?
- In what arenas does God tend to focus His work? What types of things is He primarily concerned with?

God is concerned with every aspect of our lives, but His work centers on His kingdom. This week we're going to focus on God's mission on earth and the work He's engaged in. When God's Word is sown and heeded, His kingdom on earth grows. And we have the huge privilege of being able to join Him in His work.

### DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 34 in the Winter issue of *Collegiate* magazine for related statistics and a video idea.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the session on page 34 of the Winter 2009–10 *Collegiate* magazine.

### 1). GOD'S WORD IS SOWN (MARK 4:14-20)

#### READ MARK 4:14-20.

<sup>14</sup>The sower sows the word. <sup>15</sup>These are the ones along the path where the word is sown: when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word sown in them. <sup>16</sup>And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, immediately they receive it with joy. <sup>17</sup>But they have no root in themselves; they are short-lived. When affliction or persecution comes because of the word, they immediately stumble. <sup>18</sup>Others are sown among thorns; these are the ones who hear the word, <sup>19</sup>but the worries of this age, the seduction of wealth, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. <sup>20</sup>But the ones sown on good ground are those who hear the word, welcome it, and produce a crop: 30, 60, and 100 times what was sown."

Have someone read "God's Word Is Sown" on page 34 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- When looking at the characters in this passage, who do you feel most like?
- In our society, who usually takes responsibility for sowing God's Word?
- Who should take responsibility?

It might have made sense for the sower in this passage to become frustrated with the reactions of the hearers and give up on sowing the Word.

- Draw some parallels between the reactions of the people in this passage and the reactions of people you come in contact with to the Word of God.

- What can we learn about our own situations from this sower? (Think in terms of persistence, faithfulness, responsibility, God's work, etc.)

When God's Word is sown, the best possible outcome is for the hearers to heed the Word.

### 2). GOD'S WORD IS HEDED (MARK 4:21-25)

#### READ MARK 4:21-25.

<sup>21</sup>He also said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed? Isn't it to be put on a lampstand? <sup>22</sup>For nothing is concealed except to be revealed, and nothing hidden except to come to light. <sup>23</sup>If anyone has ears to hear, he should listen!" <sup>24</sup>Then He said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear. By the measure you use, it will be measured and added to you. <sup>25</sup>For to the one who has, it will be given, and from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away."

Ask a volunteer to read "God's Word Is Heeded" on page 34 of *Collegiate* magazine.

In this passage, Jesus uses the analogy of the lamp to represent Himself and His mission. His mission was partially concealed until His resurrection, at which point everything came together and made sense to His followers.<sup>5</sup>

- We have the benefit of having the Bible to explain God's plan, but what factors make it difficult today for us to understand what it is God is doing in the world?
- In what ways does God help us better understand His mission and ways we can join His work?

5. James A. Brooks, *The New American Commentary: Mark* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 84.

- How well do you have to know God in order to join His work?
- What is at stake if we choose not to join God at work?

The result of God's Word going out and being heeded is that His kingdom will grow.

### 3). GOD'S KINGDOM GROWS (MARK 4:26-32)

#### READ MARK 4:26-32.

<sup>26</sup>"The kingdom of God is like this," He said. "A man scatters seed on the ground; <sup>27</sup>he sleeps and rises; night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows—he doesn't know how. <sup>28</sup>The soil produces a crop by itself—first the blade, then the head, and then the ripe grain on the head. <sup>29</sup>But as soon as the crop is ready, he sends for the sickle, because harvest has come."

<sup>30</sup>And He said: "How can we illustrate the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use to describe it? <sup>31</sup>It's like a mustard seed that, when sown in the soil, is smaller than all the seeds on the ground. <sup>32</sup>And when sown, it comes up and grows taller than all the vegetables, and produces large branches, so that the birds of the sky can nest in its shade."

Have someone read "God's Kingdom Grows" on page 34 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- What do these analogies from agriculture tell us about the way the kingdom of God works?
- Why can we have confidence in joining the work God is doing on earth?

Facilitator's Note: Connect the dots with another passage ...

**READ ISAIAH 55:10-11.**

*<sup>10</sup>For just as rain and snow fall from heaven, and do not return there without saturating the earth, and making it germinate and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat, <sup>11</sup>so My word that comes from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please, and will prosper in what I send it to do."*

- In what ways is this passage encouraging to believers who can't see many obvious results from their faithfulness to God?

