

Newsong NOC Study

Soul Talk – Week 2

Opening Question: How have you been challenged in your walk with Jesus the past few weeks?

This past Sunday, Tommy shared with us about the kingdom of God that is at work in the present as we engage in relationship with Jesus. What does all of that really mean? How do we participate with what Jesus is doing in our personal lives, and then partake in what He wants to do in others around us and beyond?

Read Luke 13:18-21

Jesus uses two metaphors here to describe the kingdom of God. One is the mustard seed, which was the smallest known seed in Jesus' time. It can grow to a height of 8 - 12 ft. This parable shows the enormous effect that a small mustard seed can have - to grow so big that it can even nest birds. The Jews at the time expected the kingdom of God to come with apocalyptic power, bringing God's judgment on evil. But Jesus' teaching shows that it would arrive in a less "significant" way. Similarly, Jesus talks about the small amount of yeast that can permeate a large amount of dough to produce significant amount of bread (that could feed 100 people!). There is a gradual process of growth shown in this passage.

1) How is this image similar or different than what you anticipate when you think about the kingdom of God?

As we are called to participate in God's kingdom, there is work that God wants to do in us. As we took steps to confess last week, by laying down our rights, our pride, and our attachments, we made room for God to work in our hearts. Confession and repentance (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15; Acts 2:28, 3:19, 1 John 1:9) is a practice that releases us to admit our unrighteousness and need for God.

2) We spent time examining our areas of sin and unforgiveness last week - how have things been for you this week? As you confessed and repented, have you allowed God to continue working in your life? Or has it been difficult?

Read John 3:1-8, 16-21

3) What does it mean to be "born again"?

When we accept Christ into our hearts, we are made new by the Spirit, are called to embrace His authority in our lives and pursue a life of holiness. We are forgiven, cleansed from our sins, and are justified by faith to have a personal relationship with God (1 Corinthians 6:11, Romans 8:1-2). However, the process of the Spirit changing us takes time - we still struggle with our sins, our fleshly desires, and stray away from God's call in our lives. The process can even be frustrating, and we are tempted to "do," or act in works of righteousness (aka doing good things) to lead us to holiness. Yet there is a deeper work that God desires to do in our lives to draw us closer to Him - He calls us to live by the Spirit (John 4:24, Romans 8:5-17).

4) What do you think "living by the Spirit means? How can you do that in your day-to-day schedule?

The transformation that God seeks to do in us takes place in the context of a loving relationship with God. We need the Spirit to enable us to truly love God and our neighbor. We need the Spirit to follow God's call for our lives. In order for the Spirit to move in and through us, we need to embrace God's love for us first.

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Read 1 John 4:7-21

5) What are things that keep us from experiencing God's love for us? Think about the struggles that you experience in the day-to-day. Think about how you tend to desire to live for yourself and fill yourself. Then think about how God sees you.

A life in pursuit of holiness is not a mere act of obedience to God, but an act of love that responds to the initial love given to man by God.

6) How do you respond to the love God has for you? How do you desire to respond?

We see in the 1 John that God expresses His full express of love in and through us as we allow God to live in us (v.12).

7) How can we allow God to dwell in us to help us love others around us?