

# The Mustard Seed Movement

## Possible Themes and Scriptures

*(Below are suggested Scriptures and Themes for possible sessions of the Mustard Seed Movement. The first five sessions listed are required in order to be called a Mustard Seed Group– the remaining four sessions of the total of nine may be chosen by each set of leaders. Sessions can be done in an order determined by the leadership, but it is recommended to begin with either the “Nazareth” or “Mustard Seed” session. Please recall that these are guidelines: leaders may choose to use fewer Scriptures, or to focus on the Scripture itself rather than a particular theme. The ultimate goal is not to impart a specific agenda, but to gather together to read Scripture through the lens of our unique experiences as ministers of the Gospel in rural places, and to trust the Spirit to speak. Additional Lesson Materials can be found on the Mustard Seed blog at <http://themustardseedmovement.blogspot.com>.)*

### 1. “Can Anything Good Come Out of Nazareth?”

- John 1: 43-51 (Philip and Nathaniel)
- Matthew 13: 44-50 (Three Surprising Parables of the Kingdom)

*(We could discuss the both the negative and positive perceptions of rural ministry, as well as its ultimate significance, through the lens of Nathaniel’s comment about Jesus’ home village of Nazareth.)*

### 2. “Pitching Tent: Serving the God Who Moved In”

- John 1: 1-18 (The Word became Flesh)
- I Corinthians 9: 16-23 (Becoming all things to all people)
- Matthew 3: 13-17 (Christ’s baptism in the Jordan)

*(We could discuss how to engage in incarnational ministry, truly loving people where and as they are, even as the Word became flesh and lived (“pitched tent”) among us)*

### 3. “Looking for What is Lost”

- Luke 15: 1-10 (Parables of the Lost Sheep and Coin)
- John 4: 1-45 (The Samaritan Woman at the Well)

*(We could reflect together about the God who eats with sinners and seeks the lost, and think about who and where “the lost” are in our communities: as well as how we can eat and drink with them.)*

### 4. “Mustard Seed Spirituality”

- Matthew 13: 31-32 (Parable of the Mustard Seed)
- John 13 (Jesus washes the disciples’ feet)

*(We could look at how to have a spirituality that can find God in the “little things” of the everyday, and see God at work through the mustard seed conspiracy of the church.)*

### 5. “The One Foundation of Christian Leadership”

- I Corinthians 3 (God who alone gives the growth)

*(We can discuss how Jesus Christ, and not any human leadership, is the foundation for the church, and how this redefines success and failure for those of us who lead.)*

## 6. “Change and Conflict in Christ”

-Matthew 18: 1-5, 15-22 (Directly addressing those who have sinned)

-Matthew 13: 24-30 (The Wheat and the Weeds)

-Numbers 13:17 – 14:25 (Moses sends spies into the Promised Land)

-Philippians 2 (Hymn of Christ’s humility)

*(We could talk about how to initiate change and navigate conflict in the local church in a way that is redemptive and that creates new life.)*

## 7. “Right Relationship”

-Matthew 22: 34-40 (The Great Commandment)

-I Corinthians 13: 4-7 (What Love is)

-Luke 19: 1-10 (The Good Samaritan)

*(We could focus on the importance of relationships and relationship dynamics in the rural church, and how we minister through these connections.)*

## 8. “The Father’s Farm: Working the Land, Growing Community”

-Matthew 9: 36-38 (Harvest is Plentiful)

-Luke 13: 6-9 (Good and Bad fruit trees)

-I Corinthians 3: 6-9 (God’s field, God gives growth)

-Isaiah 61: 8-11 (Righteousness and Praise shall spring up)

*(Using the image of a farm, as well as some of the thoughts of writer Wendell Berry’s poem “The Farm,” we could talk about how we assess the gifts, needs, and possibilities of our communities and churches, and how to “work with the grain” to find responses consistent with God’s design.)*

## 9. “Turning Away from Tarshish: from Acedia to Fidelity”

-Jonah

-Ecclesiastes 1: 1-14; 2: 18-24; 5: 4-7 (Nothing new under the sun)

-Luke 6: 46-49 (Wise and Foolish Builders)

*(We could discuss the need for constancy in rural ministry, of finding ways to sustain our spiritual lives so that we can “bloom where we are planted,” find contentment, and stay in love with God, our neighbors, and our place over the long haul.)*

## 10. “Born to Be a Branch”

-John 15: 1-17 (The Vine and the Branches)

-Luke 10: 38-42 (Jesus, Martha, and Mary)

*(We could talk about what it means to truly abide in God, but also be reminded that we are just branches, and thus gifted with the graces of limitation and Sabbath.)*

## 11. “The Reconciling Mission of the Church”

- Acts 10 (Peter and Cornelius)
- Acts 9 (Saul/Paul and Ananias)
- II Corinthians 5:10- 6:1 (The Ministry of Reconciliation)

*(We discuss how faithful Christian leadership means discerning the surprising streams of the Spirit, and how it results in different peoples becoming reconciled.)*

## 12. “Christian Leadership in Economic Crisis”

- Matthew 25: 31-45 (Parable of the Sheep and Goats)
- Matthew 20: 1-16 (Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard)
- I Kings 17 (Elijah in a Time of Drought; Widow of Zarepheth)
- Luke 16: 1-12 (Parable of the Dishonest Manager)
- Matthew 25: 14-30 (Parable of the Talents)
- I Timothy 6: 6-19 (Contentment vs. Love of Money)
- I Samuel 17 (David and Goliath: Not much, but enough)

*(Drawing on one or two of the passages above, we can discuss how Christians can be courageous stewards of God’s abundance in a world of greed and scarcity.)*

## 13. “Gideon’s Victory over the Midianites”

- Judges 6:1-7:24

*(The story of Gideon’s small band overcoming the Midianites provides an opportunity to identify the forces oppressing our rural communities and people, and gives an example of how such forces can be overcome by the grace of God.)*

## 14. “After Easter”

- John 20: 19-23 (Jesus’s Commission)
- Luke 24: 13-35 (Jesus in the Upper Room)
- Mark 16: 1-8 (“He is not here; He is Risen”)

*(These stories of Easter could guide us in a discussion of what it would mean to be a church that is truly open to the resurrected Christ in our changing communities.)*