

Spring 2010

SMALL GROUP SERIES

Christ and Culture

Discussion Guide

Week 5

Small Groups 
Transforming Community @ RBCPC

Christ and Culture: Jesus and the Workplace

Note: The scripture for this study, and following discussion guide, is different from the scripture used in worship May 1/2, although still relevant and appropriate for the topic.

Mark 3:31-35 (TNIV)

14"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15To one he gave five talents [a] of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19"After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'

21"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

22"The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.'

23"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

24"Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

26"His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

28" 'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 30And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

[a] one talent= years of a days wages

Facilitator's Guide

Listening is a crucial skill for small-groups to master. Here are ten practical tips for improving our listening habits.

1. Be quiet. This should be obvious, but it often is the biggest obstruction to listening. The leader should be part of a discussion without monopolizing it.
2. Try to understand. The goal of listening is to understand what the person is really saying.
3. Eliminate distractions. People feel comfortable sharing when they are not interrupted. Turn the phone ringer off. Make sure you have childcare arranged. Don't look at your watch or lesson plan when someone is speaking.
4. Empathize. Interject short statements to show you understand and accept what the person is saying. "That sounds exciting!" or "That must have been a hard decision to make" are good examples of how to show empathy.
5. Don't judge. Especially when someone is already hurting, a judgmental attitude can do more harm than good. Don't condone sin, of course, but recognize the difference between acceptance and approval.
6. Avoid advising. Unless they ask for it, people usually do not want or need you to try to solve their problem. They just need someone to listen.
7. Verify and clarify. If you don't understand what someone is saying, ask. "Here's what I hear you saying. Am I right?" is one good clarifier.
8. Listen for what is not said. Try to hear the meaning behind the words. Watch body language and listen to tone of voice. Sometimes what a person is saying is lost behind a clutter of words.
9. Watch body language. Sometimes a person's posture or gestures can say more than words.
10. Affirm. "Thanks for sharing that. I'm sure it isn't easy to talk about right now." This builds acceptance for talking about difficult things and makes it easier for someone else to share.

Mike Mack, co-founder of Smallgroups.com.

What's Next?

This is the last of the Christ and Culture series! We hope this has been a positive time spiritually and relationally for you and your group. Facilitators: watch for an email from the small group ministry team next week with an update on what's next for 2010.

Christ and Culture: Jesus and the Workplace

START IT

- On a scale from 1-10, how engaged are you with your work? (Define what your 'work' is)
- What keeps people from giving their best in a given situation?

STUDY IT

- Read the Matthew passage. What's the parable? Make observations.
- <It was expected in ancient Israel to at least double -if not 5-10 times- the original cash amount through lending.> What do the first two servants do? Why?
- How does the master respond to those two servants? What do they receive?
- What does the last servant do? Why?
- What was expected of the servants? Why?
- What is Jesus teaching through this parable about what we are supposed to do with what is entrusted to us?
- What has been entrusted to us? What does it look like for us to invest our 'talents' well?

LIVE IT

- From whom have you withheld your talents? How will you change that? When will you do it?
- Who in your life is wasting his/her potential? What can you do to wake them up?

PRAY IT

- For courage to become engaged at work.
- For the courage to give ourselves away without expecting a return.