

Dear Zion Family,

Hello! I love gathering with God's people. But in reality, how much do I really retain? Have I been ready to hear from God? Will I in fact apply what he has taught me? Not only will my life change, but will my heart change as well? I wish there was some kind of formula or check off list to follow. These kinds of changes are an act of God. As a Christ follower, I can respond to God's influence by ignoring it, resisting it, or embracing it. I know how I should respond, so do you.

How does God work in our lives? Usually in several general ways. He can bring trials. He can discipline. He may offer instruction. We can learn from a message, book, or story. He often uses us, his church. He may use us to influence others in a planned gathering, a phone call, an unplanned comment, an instant message, in small groups, or in large groups. God speaks through his word and through the indwelling Holy Spirit. But again, will we ignore it, resist it, or embrace it?

It's the pastor's desire to do whatever we can to help and encourage you to be better disciples of Jesus. This means we listen. This means we are actively helping others become better disciples. We do this inside and outside the church. Prayerfully, your time with your Life Group, our Sunday gatherings, your time alone with God, and your willingness to embrace Him will bring you to places you never dreamed about. Hopefully, these discussion questions (based on our Sunday morning gatherings) will help remove some of the cogs in the gears.

Each week contains four sections:

- Till: Get the soil ready for planting. Are we ready to hear? Hearts prepared or distracted?
- Sow: What does God want us to hear? This could be from Sunday, a lesson learned earlier in the week, or something new from your Life Group time.
- Plant: We are not just filling blanks on a page. Planting involves working the truth down into the heart where it grows.
- Harvest: So, what has God done? Where has the fruit of the Spirit bloomed where it did not before? How has your heart changed? And, where's the evidence? What are the next steps inside and outside the church?

Ready? Willing?

Please let me know if you have any questions or need clarity throughout 2013.

Pastor Joe



helping people far from God discover life in JESUS

Till

- Last Sunday, we were challenged to prepare for our gathering: “Why are you here? What have you done to prepare for here? What do you expect from being here?”
- How did that go? How did you answer those questions?
- On another note, can you describe a time when you were chewed out? Did you deserve it? Did it make the point?

Sow

- What does sovereignty mean (not necessarily from a theology sense but generally)? If you were teaching this idea to a child, what synonyms would you use?
- What do you have sovereignty over? Besides God, what has sovereignty over you? What are the expectations in these relationships or areas?
- God was king before there was a kingdom. Look at some other biblical examples of this.

In the message, you may have read Gen. 1, Job 38, Heb. 1, or John 1; you may re-examine those, but here are some more; Matt. 20:1-15; Rom. 9:20-21; Eph. 1:11; Matt. 7:24-27

Plant

- God remains King regardless of our obedience. We know we cannot pick and choose what we obey, but we do it anyway. How?
- Where has God been instructing you but you've not listened?
 - Area of growth?
 - Area of sin?
 - Making a commitment to his vision and plan for the world; making disciples, missions, generosity, etc.?
 - Selectively editing out verses from the Bible?
 - Explaining away responsibility to show love towards others inside and outside the church family?



Honest

- For 2013, the pastors have encouraged the use of a notebook or journal. Often for the Life Group discussion questions, it will be assumed that each person follows this practice!
- Get real with God. In your journal:
 - Record what you learned from Sunday's message and from this study time.
 - If your entry is personal, find someone you can trust. Record the person's name and when you will speak to them. Encourage them to pray for you and keep you accountable for a period of time.
 - If you need to follow God in an area of his vision for the world, what do you need to do?
- Write a missionary?
- Make plans to take that co-worker to lunch or invite his family over for dinner?
- Stop talking about meeting with another Christ-follower and set the day?
- Any goals for your entire Life Group?
- These are just examples, but record what you need to do in your journal. Don't forget these commitments. Use a family calendar or tech gadget that can remind you to review these journal entries.

Next week, Jan. 13, there was a king before there was a kingdom. But later, there was a war.

