



SESSION TWENTY-FIVE:

# parables



# SESSION OVERVIEW

## SUPPLIES

- ▶ **Echo the Story DVD/video** for this session
- ▶ **Echo the Story Sketch Journals** for every participant
- ▶ Markers, pens, and colored pencils

## ① **rewind** THE STORY [10 MINUTES]

The Story So Far video begins with a two-minute interaction for your group. Following this interaction, the video will show a fast-paced, animated review of the Bible's story from the beginning up to the next story we will hear.

## ② **prepare** FOR THE STORY [10 MINUTES]

Participants will draw their own version of this session's story symbol in their Sketch Journals. Then, a participant will read a section from the Sketch Journal that helps ready the group for imaginative listening.

## ③ **imagine** THE STORY [5 MINUTES]

The leader will now tell this session's Bible story. A carefully crafted narrative script of the story is provided in this Leader Guide.

## ④ **capture** WHAT YOU NOTICE [5 MINUTES]

The leader will ask someone of a different gender to do a second telling of the story. During this telling, participants will use their Sketch Journals to capture aspects of the story that stand out to them.

## ⑤ **remix** THE STORY \*TIME PERMITTING [10 MINUTES]

Participants will be invited to choose from two REMIX activities (included in the Sketch Journal) that guide them to retell part of the Bible story in their own unique way.

## ⑥ **connect** TO YOUR STORY [20 MINUTES]

Finally, the leader will guide a group dialogue where participants are asked to share their observations and insights from the story. Dialogue questions are provided in this Leader Guide.



## THE STORY SO FAR VIDEO

*Leader Says:*

Right now we're going to continue our journey through the Bible.

We're going to start with a short video. The first two minutes give you a chance to answer a question with a partner.

After the timer finishes, the next part of the video will start right away. **This will give us a quick review of the Bible's story from the beginning up to the next story we are about to hear.** So, find a partner and get ready, because this video moves really fast. You'll have to pay attention and listen carefully. *Are you ready?*

- ▶ CUE: Play The Story So Far video for this session.

Even though this is written like a script, please personalize the "Leader Says" parts. You'll be more effective if you're not just reading directly from the page!



## SKETCH JOURNALS

*Leader Says:*

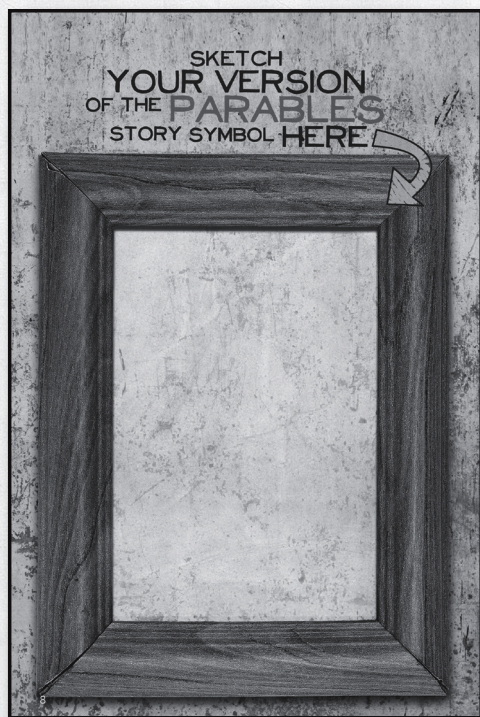
Before we talk about the video, I want to give each of you a **Sketch Journal**. These Sketch Journals are designed especially for our experience together, giving us space to draw and write and capture all the things we notice as we explore the stories from the Bible.

- ▶ CUE: Pass out Sketch Journals and ask each participant to write his or her name on the **back cover**. Provide pens, markers, and colored pencils for participants to use.

The video you will play for Session 25 is a bit longer because it recaps the stories from all of the previous Echo the Story 36 sessions.



# prepare FOR THE STORY



## DRAW THE STORY SYMBOL

Leader Says:

Our Sketch Journals are an important part of our Echo experience. They'll give us space to express our creativity, explore our questions, and capture the thoughts and ideas that these stories spark in us.



Each story will have its own **symbol** as a visual reminder of what happens in the story. Right now, turn to **page 8** and *draw your own version* of the symbol for the next story: PARABLES (plant and seed) in your Sketch Journal.

You may be wondering why we are redrawing this symbol when it's printed on the next page. When we each create our *own* version of this story's symbol, it embeds this image in our minds and helps get our **creativity flowing** for the rest of the activities we'll do later.

The goal isn't to copy the symbol—*be creative and make it your own!*

- ▶ **CUE:** Don't spend a lot of time on this activity—*two minutes or less.*

Encourage participants to draw their own version of the story symbol, regardless of their artistic ability. The goal is not to create an exact replica but to capture your own interpretation.

## THE BIBLE IS LIKE . . .

Leader Says:

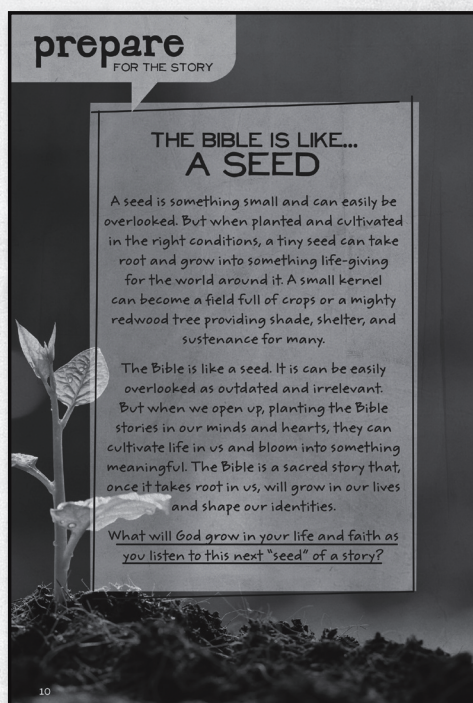
Each session of Echo will invite us to experience a story from the Bible. But before we dive into each story, we'll slow down and take time to *prepare ourselves*. To help us do this, we'll compare the Bible to a different image or object.

The first object is **a seed**.



Let's hear more about this from **page 10** of your Sketch Journal.

- ▶ **CUE:** Ask for a volunteer from your group to read page 10 of their Sketch Journal.





## ABOUT THIS STORY [read silently]

Leader Says:

Take a moment **in silence** to look at the **ABOUT THIS STORY** section on **page 11** in your Sketch Journal.

- ▶ **CUE:** After twenty seconds of silent reading, move to the next section. (You don't need to discuss the "Think About" question.)

## IMAGINATIVE LISTENING

Leader Says:

Your imagination can bring a story to life right behind your eyes. When you listen with your imagination you are doing more than just hearing words—you are seeing the worlds these words create.

Let's slow down and prepare ourselves for the next story. Push out any distractions and use your imagination to enter the story, seeing it come to life in your mind.

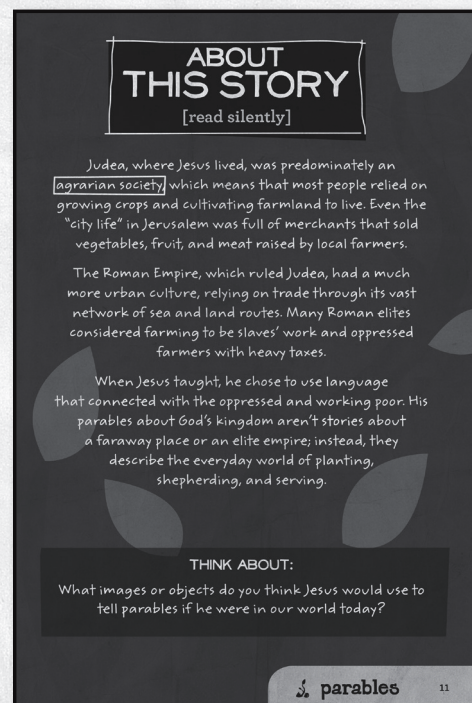
You might want to close your eyes or focus on the image on **pages 12-13**. After we hear the story read once, you'll have a chance to capture what you noticed in your Sketch Journal.

*Are you ready?*

Take a moment of silence. Sit up straight in your chair. Take a deep breath, slow down, and clear your mind. Whisper a prayer asking God to show you something meaningful from this story.

- ▶ **CUE:** After about fifteen seconds of quiet, begin narrating the story.

To create a sense of reverence for the telling of the Bible story, you may want to have someone from your group light a candle.





# imagine THE STORY

Don't just read this story;  
bring it to life with  
your voice!

Leader Narrates:

## SCENE ONE: SEEDS OF THE KINGDOM

One day, a crowd gathered around Jesus to hear him teach. People were packed in so tightly that Jesus got into a boat and pushed out onto the water so that everyone on the shore could see and hear him.

As he often did, Jesus taught using parables—short stories from everyday life that convey powerful truths. Sitting in a boat, Jesus told the crowd this parable:

*“A farmer went out to his field and scattered seeds everywhere he could. Some of the seeds fell on the road, and birds swooped down and ate them.*

*“Other seeds fell in shallow soil with rocky ground underneath them. These seeds sprouted quickly, but the plants couldn't take root in the rocks, so they withered in the hot sun.*

*“Other seeds fell in soil full of weeds that choked the life out of the plants before they could grow large.*

*“But some seeds fell on good soil. These seeds grew and grew. Eventually they produced a huge harvest of crops, a hundred times more than the tiny seeds from which they began.” [pause]*

Most often, Jesus did not explain the meaning of his parables. But this time, Jesus gathered his closest followers and told them:

*“This parable is about God's kingdom. The seeds represent the message of God's kingdom. People are like the soil: some hear the message but they just let it sit on the surface—they seem interested at first, but it is soon forgotten, and the kingdom never takes root in their life. Others allow the kingdom to be choked out of their lives by weeds of worry and greed. But some really listen. They allow the message to grow down deep into their lives. Eventually, the kingdom produces incredible fruit in their lives that blesses others.”*

**Tell the story from  
beginning to end—  
don't stop!**

You'll cause confusion by stopping to answer a question, teach, clarify, give application, or make an observation in the middle of the story.

## SCENE TWO: A GREAT FEAST

One day, the leader of the Pharisees invited Jesus over for dinner. (The Pharisees were religious leaders who emphasized the careful following of Jewish laws.) Jesus noticed that as the guests arrived, they all tried to sit in seats of honor closest to the head of the table. So Jesus said to them, *“If you exalt yourself, you'll be humbled. But if you humble yourself, you'll be honored.”*



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Jesus turned to the host and said, *“When you host a dinner, don’t just invite your friends and family and rich neighbors. Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, and the blind. Bless those who have nothing to give in return—then God will bless you.”*

Then a guest sitting at the table said to Jesus, *“What a blessing it will be to eat a banquet in God’s kingdom!”* Some of the Jews believed that one day after the messiah had come and delivered them from their enemies, they would celebrate with a great banquet.

Jesus replied to the man using this parable: *“A man prepared a great feast and sent out invitations to his friends. When the day of the banquet came, all of his invited guests made excuses for why they couldn’t attend. The host was furious. So he said to his servant, ‘Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, and the blind.’*

*Right away, the servant did this, and people began to join the banquet. But the servant told the host, ‘There is still more room.’ So the host said, ‘Well then, look along the country roads and behind the hedges—invite anyone you can find, so that my house will be full! But be sure of this: no one that was originally invited will enjoy this great feast.’*

## SCENE THREE: THE LOST SON

Jesus continued to spend time with people whom society considered impure and immoral. When some of the Pharisees and religious leaders complained about the company Jesus kept, Jesus told them this parable:

*“A man had two sons. The younger son came to his father one day and said, ‘I want my inheritance now, before you die.’*

*Even though this was a deeply offensive request, the father still divided his wealth and gave his young son his inheritance early.*

*Right away the younger son took his inheritance, packed up his belongings, and moved far away. Before long, he had wasted all of his money on wild living. He was so poor that he took any job he could find—even feeding pigs on a farm. (This was the last job a Jew would ever take because they’d be considered unclean and cast out of society.)*

*When the young man became so hungry that even the food in the pigs’ trough started to look good, he came to his senses and thought to himself: ‘My father’s servants eat better than this. I will return and beg my father to hire me as a servant.’ So the son began a long journey home.*



# imagine THE STORY

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*Far away, in the distance, the father saw his younger son walking toward their home. Filled with compassion, the father ran to his son and wrapped his arms around him, hugging and kissing him. The son said, 'Father, I don't deserve this. I've disgraced you and I turned away from God. I should no longer be called your son.'*

*But his father called to his servants and said, 'Quickly—bring my finest robe and put it on my son! Get him a ring and sandals!' (This would let everyone know that the father had restored the son to a position of honor and authority.) 'We must celebrate with a great feast,' the father continued, 'for my son was dead and has returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found!'*

*And so they had a huge, extravagant party to welcome the lost son home.*

*As the older son returned from working in the field, he wondered why there was loud music and dancing going on in his house. When he discovered that the party was for his wayward brother, he was furious and refused to join in the celebration.*

*His father begged him to come into the house. But the older son said, 'All these years I've worked hard for you and done whatever you asked. But you've never given me a feast with my friends. But when this son of yours comes back after wasting all of your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by giving him a meal of our best calf?'*

*The father replied, 'My son, you are always with me. Everything I have is yours. We must be happy and celebrate this day. Your brother was dead and came back to life. He was lost, but now he is found!'*



# capture WHAT YOU NOTICE

## MOMENT OF REFLECTION

Leader Says:

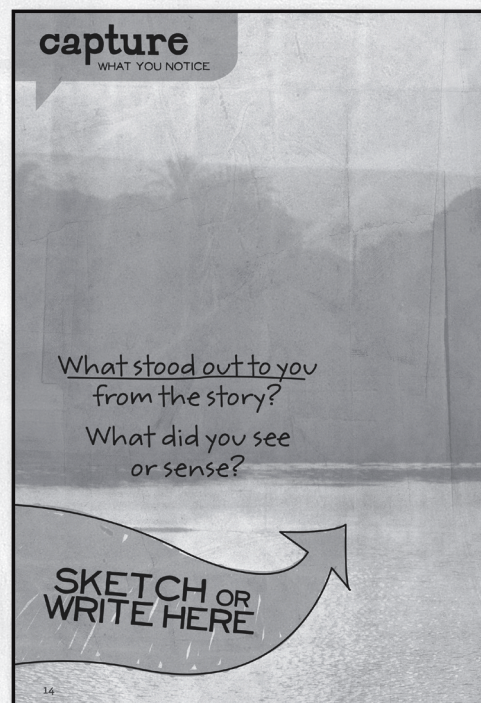
Take a moment to close your eyes and let the story replay in your mind. Pay attention to what stands out to you from the story.

- ▶ CUE: After fifteen to twenty seconds, transition to the second reading.

## SECOND TELLING & CAPTURING

We're going to listen to the story one more time, but this time with **a different voice telling it**. During this telling of the story, turn to **pages 14-15** and write or draw the words or images that come to mind. Use these pages to capture anything that you notice—even if it seems like a small detail. You will be surprised—even small things that you notice will spark thoughts and insights from our group.

- ▶ CUE: For this second telling, use a storyteller of a **different gender** from the person who read the first time. *Different voices help people to listen with fresh ears.*





## REMIX ACTIVITIES

### Leader Says:

Now that we've heard the story twice and begun to capture what we noticed, let's REMIX the story. There are two REMIX activities, designed to help you retell part of the story in your own unique way.

There is a **drawing activity** on **pages 16-17**

and a **creative writing activity** on **pages 18-19**.

**These are not fill-in-the-blank activities!** These activities are designed to help you express yourself and share what *you* see in the story.

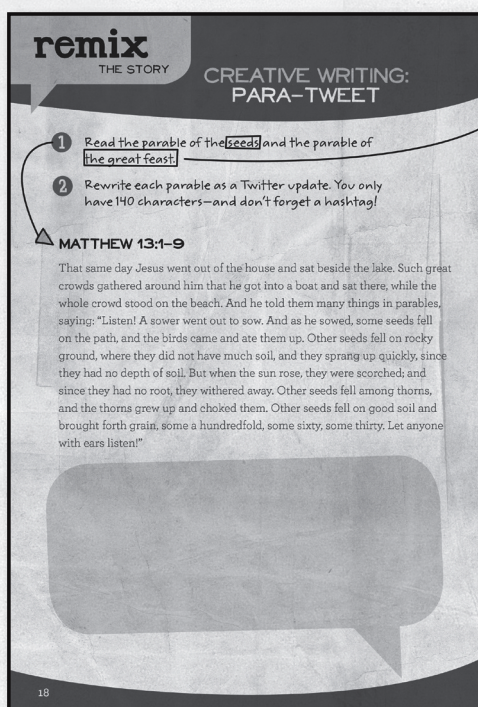
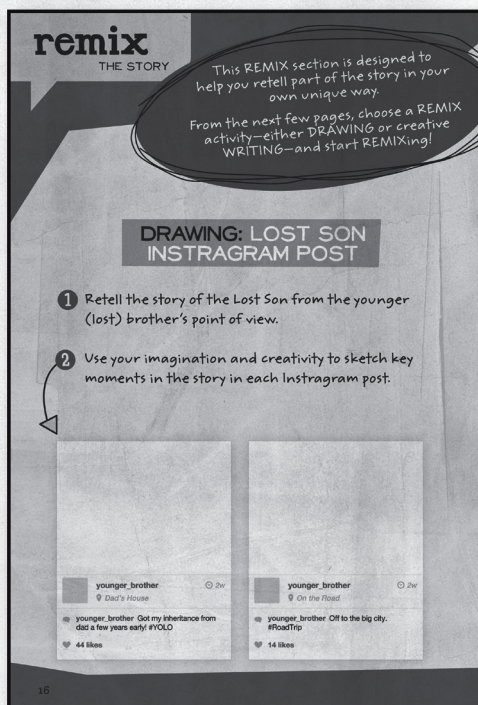
**Or** if you'd prefer, you may instead **continue to develop** your thoughts and drawings from the CAPTURE pages you just worked on.

Whatever you choose, take the next ten minutes to **use your imagination** to create your REMIX and then we will share them with each other. Invest yourself honestly in this and you will be surprised at your insight and creativity.

- ▶ **CUE:** After ten minutes (or less if your group finishes sooner), go to the next section.

### Try Out REMIX Activities Beforehand

Read through (and try) the REMIX activities before the session. This will help you give a clear explanation of the activities and be better equipped to answer questions.





## TURN & SHARE

Leader Says:

Now, turn to someone near you and share your CAPTURE or REMIX with them. Remember to respect each other's ideas and encourage one another.

- ▶ CUE: After about two minutes, begin the dialogue.

## GROUP DIALOGUE

Leader Says:

Now we'll share as a group. This time is about sharing observations and **seeing the story through one another's eyes.**

Look at **page 20** of your Sketch Journal for a moment. This is an important page. This where you can make note of things that others share that connect with you. A big part of this experience is listening and learning from each other. I am certain I will learn a lot from you.

- + So what stood out to you from this story?
- + What did this story make you wonder about?

**LEADER:** Don't give answers to participants' wonderings and questions. In fact, share an example of what you are wondering about the story.

- + Who'd like to share something you've written or drawn from the CAPTURE or REMIX sections?

### DIALOGUE PREP

1. There are probably more questions here than you'll have time to ask. Pick a few questions ahead of time that you want to make sure to ask.
2. Questions in gray and marked with a dash are for follow-up. Ask them as time allows and as they are needed.

connect  
TO YOUR STORY

### RIGHT NOW:

TURN TO SOMEONE NEAR YOU  
AND SHARE WHAT YOU'VE  
WRITTEN OR DRAWN ON THE  
**CAPTURE  
AND REMIX**  
PAGES.

jot down stuff here that  
OTHERS SHARE that  
connects with you.

20



# connect TO YOUR STORY

## Leader Says:

I have a few more questions to ask you about the story. I am not looking for “correct” answers—this time is about you sharing your observations. **I want to see the story through your eyes.** Ready?

- + How would you describe Jesus in this story? Say the first thing that comes to your mind.
- + Why do you think Jesus taught in parables?
  - Why do you think that Jesus often did not explain his parables?

### Allow for Silence

This approach to the Bible will be new for many people. For the first few sessions, your group may be hesitant to share as they try to orient themselves. Don't worry! Allow quiet time for participants to reflect on the story without trying to provide answers. After a few sessions, you will see people begin to open up much more.

*The first parable compared God's kingdom to a seed that requires good soil in order to grow.*

- + Why do you think Jesus explained the meaning of this parable?
- + Take a moment and think about this question: Based on this parable, what is God like? (Pause for ten seconds.) What do you think?

*The second parable that Jesus told was at a dinner with the Pharisees. Take a moment to think back to this scene. (After a moment ask:)*

- + What do you think it would've been like to be a guest at that dinner?
- + Why do you think the Pharisees became so angry with Jesus?
- + Take a moment again to think about this: Based on this parable, what is God like? (Pause for ten seconds.) What do you think?
- + The last scene of this story was the Parable of the Lost Son. Close your eyes for a moment and let this scene play in your mind. (Pause, then continue slowly.) Imagine you have a camera and you are watching this scene take place right in front of you. Pick a moment in the story to take a picture of.



(Pause for ten seconds.) *Do you have your picture?  
Who would like to share about your image?*

- + Of the three characters in the story of the lost son—the father, the younger brother, and the older brother—which one do you relate to most? Why?
- + Why do you think the older son was so upset about his brother's party?
  - How would you have responded if you were the older brother?
- + Take a moment again to think about this: Based on this parable, what is God like? (Pause for ten seconds.) What do you think?

## FINAL QUESTION

Take a quiet moment to think about this final question:

- + What does this story say about us? About you?

Write a quick response on **page 21** in your Sketch Journal.

- ▶ **CUE:** After twenty to thirty seconds of quiet, ask a few participants to share. Encourage participants to personalize their ideas using “I” and “me” instead of “you” and “we” language to avoid sounding overly general or preachy.

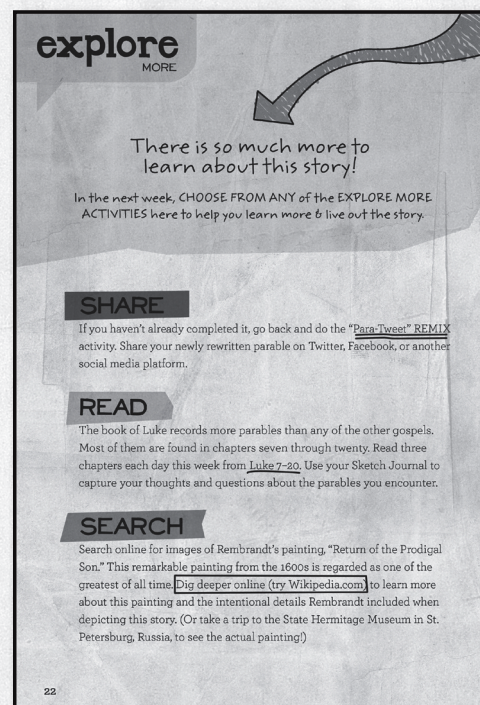
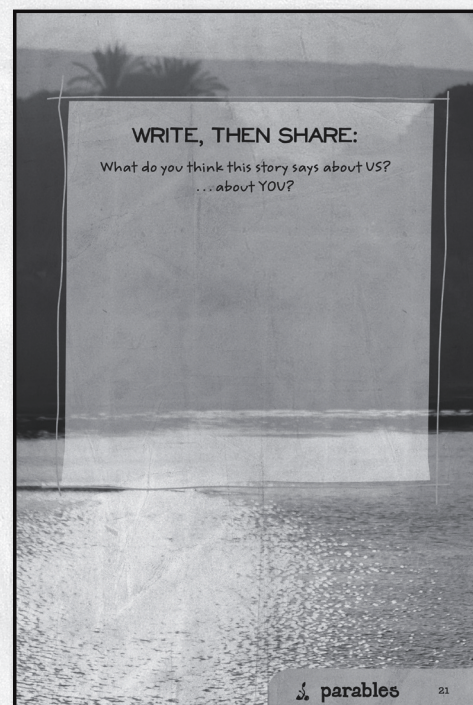
## Leader Says:

This was a really meaningful time. *Thank you!* You did a great job. I'm looking forward to gathering together again so that we can experience the next story.

If you'd like to learn more about this story, there's a section called EXPLORE MORE on **pages 22-23** of your Sketch Journal.

You are welcome to take your Sketch Journal with you and try some of these activities, but be sure to bring it back for the next story. If you're worried about forgetting it, you can leave your Sketch Journal with me.

- ▶ **CUE:** To close this session, ask someone to lead the group in prayer.





## **OPTIONAL QUESTIONS TO GO DEEPER:**

- + In your own words, describe the differences between the types of soil from Jesus' parable about the seeds.
- + How might we allow God's kingdom to grow in our lives?
- + In the parable of the great feast, the dinner guests that arrive are not those that were originally invited. How do you think the updated guest list changed the party?
- + How do you think the leader of the Pharisees who had invited Jesus to dinner felt after hearing Jesus' parable of the great feast?
- + What surprised you most from the parable of the lost son?