# Ground Zero Bible Study Leader Guide

## DESCRIPTION

Ground Zero is an Integrated Bible Study guide contextualized for Black college student ministry on campuses. Its purpose is to develop committed black students into willing missional disciples that will strategically reach out to other Black campuses or campus corners. This guide can be used at an HBCU (Historically Black College or University) or even in a context where there is little ministry happening to reach black students at non-HBCU campuses. Ground Zero serves as a guide for a small group of Black students and can be led by a staff, volunteer, or a student with high leadership capacity.

The Bible Studies within the Ground Zero guide digs into discipleship distinctives which are helpful for a planting context, while also encouraging students to consider the mission field as the Lord is working in their own hearts. There are clear application questions that connect to Black culture in general, the Black community on campus, and people's personal networks at home. The Bible Studies also incorporate inductive lines of questioning, but are discussion-based instead of investigative.

The authors designed this curriculum to work in sequence. It is also proven to be most effective when students make a commitment to complete all four Bible Studies in the series. This leader guide should be used in accompaniment with the Ground Zero Bible Study Participant Guide. We pray this tool will increase interest of Black students to establish a Black missional student core ready for preparation to be released on campus.

## GUIDE OVERVIEW

**Bible Study 1:** Mark 5:24-34 "Deal with Yourself"

**Bible Study 2:** Luke 10:25-37 "Challenge How you Love Others"

**Bible Study 3:** Luke 8:4-15 "Assess Where You Are"

**Bible Study 4:** Matthew 25:14-30 "Avoid Wasting God's Goods"

# Bible Study Preparation Guide

***Use the questions and statements below to help you prepare a plan for leading each Bible Study.***

- **Welcome and Ice-breaker and Opening Prayer (10 minutes)**
  - Start by casting vision for why you're meeting
  - Pick an icebreaker that allows for people to get to know each other
  - Use this time as a filler for those who may not arrive on-time
  - Have a couple icebreakers in mind so you are able to adjust based on attendance
  - Take some time to debrief the previous study's Active Response (if applicable)
  - End the time with prayer and transition to start your Bible Study
  - Make sure your Bible Study attendees have the Ground Zero Student Guide. Use the Leader Guide for yourself to facilitate the discussion.

- **The Bible Study (55 minutes)**
  - ***Consider (10 minutes)***
    - This section serves to give some context for the passage, identify potential areas of discomfort or confusion, and relate the passage to our world today.
    - Use the notes as a guide as you walk students through this section.
    - The final paragraph serves to help you transition from this "Consider" section to the passage and discussion for the day.
  - ***Read (5 minutes)***
    - Read the passage out loud. Engage students by inviting someone else to read the passage.
    - Summarize the passage. Invite students to summarize the main points of the passage.
  - ***Discuss (30 minutes)***
    - Walk through each question and invite people to respond.
    - As the leader of the Bible Study, you should serve as a facilitator and not a teacher. Spend time guiding the group in answering the questions for themselves using the passage.
    - Below is a list of ways you can facilitate the discussion.
      - Work through the questions all together one by one and discuss as a large group. In virtual meetings, you can utilize the chat box or a google document to allow people to share their thoughts as you walk through the questions.
      - Have students discuss all the questions in small groups (or breakout room if virtual) and then have them share their answers with the group.
      - Assign question(s) to a student or small group *(or breakout room if virtual)*. Have the students discuss their question(s) and then have the student/small group share their response(s) with the group.
  - ***Respond (10 minutes)***
    - The section serves to help students apply what they just received from the discussion.
    - In an effort to draw students attention to not only individual application, this section intentionally draws attention to cultural, campus, and community application.
    - Feel free to walk through all three sections or pick a section to highlight in discussion. If you choose to only do one section in a given week, make sure to use the other sections for applications in the studies to follow.
    - Similar to the Bible Study discussion, you can choose to lead this section as a large group or through small group discussions and presentations.

- **Personal Reflection (5 minutes)**
  - Using the student guide, invite students to spend time in personal response.
  - Examples of ways students can use this time to respond:
    - Students write out their reflections for the response as a journal.
    - Students partner *(or in a breakout room if virtual)* and share their responses with one another.
    - Students reflect silently and then share their answers with the larger group.

- **Close (5 minutes)**
  - Recap and summarize the Bible Study experience.
  - Vision cast for InterVarsity ministry
  - Conclude your Bible Study with prayer.

**What day/time/location of your meeting?** *Make sure you let your guest know if your meeting will be virtual (link to tips and link about zoom or in-person. Meeting should last at least 60-90 minutes. Use the outline above to plan your time and how you would like each section to flow.*

**Who will you invite to your Bible Study?** *Take time to list everyone you want to invite and send both an invite/reminder to each person. Try to make the invite 3-5 days prior to the gathering, and send a reminder the day of and/or before your Bible Study.*

**If you are using this guide to start a group on your campus, take time to make invitations or share vision about InterVarsity to your attendees every week. Prepare you vision cast that you will make to conclude your meeting prior to gathering.** *Your vision cast should include what is InterVarsity, what you enjoy about the ministry, how it has personally impacted you, and why they should consider being a part of the ministry or starting the ministry on their campus. Conclude with an invite to join or plant ministry. Gather contact information for those interested to share with the movement.*

# Deal With Yourself

## "Finding the Helpful Solutions for Your Suffering"

## Mark 5:24b-34 (New International Version)

## CONSIDER

As we prepare to discuss the scripture for today, we acknowledge that culture and society presents different views of Jesus.

- A "White Colonized" Jesus who was imposed on our ancestors by slave owners.
- A "Prosperity" Jesus who we connect to receive our desires, needs, and wants.
- A "Discovery Channel" Jesus who didn't exist in the way the Bible presents Him (i. e. He has a Wife, He is a myth of Romans)
- The Scriptural Jesus the woman in this story was drawn to.

**What views of Jesus have you heard from others or discovered on your own, including the views expressed above?**

The woman in this story has been suffering with her issue for an extended period of time. After visiting different doctors and spending all she had on treatments, nothing was bringing healing and her condition was growing worse.

**Do you feel like you are suffering with an issue (i.e. loneliness, abuse, physical illness, depression) and your desire for it to end? What solutions have you run to that were unhelpful?**

*We all have things we have been suffering with for an extended period time and it is getting worse. Sometimes someone's biases of Jesus affect their willingness to receive Him as a solution to their issues. We invite you to enter the text identifying with the woman as you consider your own suffering.*

## READ

24b A large crowd followed and pressed around him. 25 And a woman was
there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 26 She had
suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she
had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. 27 When she heard about
Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak,
28 because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."
29 Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was
freed from her suffering.

30 At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned
around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" 31 "You see
the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you
can ask, 'Who touched me?' "

32 But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. 33 Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her,
came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith
has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

## DISCUSS

- The crowd of people and this woman have very different experiences with Jesus. The woman received healing, but the crowd received nothing. **What do you think prevents others in the crowd from experiencing healing from Jesus that day? What is keeping you from experiencing freedom from suffering like those in the crowd who touched Jesus, but did not experience His power?**

- The woman understood enough about the power of Jesus to realize how simple it was to receive healing. With one simple touch she immediately received the healing she desired. **Are there people in your life that have convinced you that a relationship with Jesus is complex or inaccessible? How does this story encourage you in your spiritual journey?**

- Jesus tells this woman her faith is what healed her, and even though her issue might have caused others in her life, her relationships, and/or her culture to reject her, Jesus calls her daughter. He continues by directing her to go in peace and be free from all of her suffering. Jesus desires for all to receive the healing only available through Him. Her faith, which led to freedom, was empowered by what she heard about Jesus. **How does Jesus including you in the family provide healing or hope in the midst of your suffering? What do you need to hear about Jesus to experience His healing?**

- In Leviticus 15:19-33 the law states that any woman on her menstrual cycle or experiencing a flow of blood for many days is considered ceremonially unclean. It then explains how others become unclean by touching her and provides requirements for her to be clean again. Thus, this woman's presence in the crowd that day could have resulted in heavy punishment. Even so, when it was time to be bold and declare about the healing she received from Jesus at His request, she pushed through her fear and spoke her whole truth. **What are some bad consequences you might experience if you are bold in your witness about the true power and healing of Jesus? What would it take for you to push through any fears or apprehensions to boldly proclaim truth?**

## RESPOND

*We invite for you to respond in a way that speaks to transformation and affirmation of black culture, turns your attention to the black community on your campus, and focuses on impact to your home community.*

The woman in the story recognized she could not receive the healing she desired from the different physicians she turned to. Her only helpful solution was connecting to Jesus.

**Black culture** has been suffering for years. Some of the physicians we turn to are hip-hop artist, social media activists, and religious leaders. **Discuss how it would benefit our Black community…**

> …to have hip-hop artist who don't popularize problems and instead they name the problems and identify the solutions.
>
> …to have social media activist who doesn't brand the injustice issues in the world and instead mimic the civil rights approach of MLK and the Black Panthers by identifying strategies with an end goal in mind.
>
> …to have a religious leader who doesn't promote themselves or their church and instead care about the advancement of their community through biblical principles.

**Black college students and/or faculty** have been suffering for years. Some of the physicians we turn to is party culture, academic gods, and relationships. Though peace may appear to be the absence of tension, finding practical things to function more effectively provides lasting peace. **Discuss more helpful solutions outside of partying away your sorrows, burying your pain with schoolwork, or distracting yourself with unhealthy relations that would benefit the black community on your campus.**

Your **home community** has been suffering for years. Some of the physicians we turn to are our family, old friends, and our environment. However, sadly at times instead of being helpful our family ties us to old identity labels we have released or rejects us because we have received healing, our friends draw us back to old habits that never helped in the past, and our environment disguise unhelpful solutions as something easy. Think about specific issues plaguing your home community. **Discuss how it would benefit your community back home to find helpful solutions that bring transformation and relief.**

## CLOSE (PARTICIPANT RESPONSE & REFLECT)

Assess what God is doing in your heart right now. The woman in the story recognized she could not receive the healing she desired from the different physicians she turned to. What "physicians" is God inviting you to turn away from? How can you turn to helpful solutions over the next week to experience healing from your suffering?

# Challenge How You Love Others

## "Practice What Jesus REALLY Preached"

## Luke 10:25-37 (New International Version)

## CONSIDER

As we prepare to discuss the scripture today, we acknowledge that some may be confused by some of the religious undertones in the text.

In this passage, one of the main characters is the expert of the law. This expert is not a lawyer as we understand today. He is instead a knowledgeable religious person. The law identified in the text is a reference to the Old Testament Law of Moses (Leviticus 26:46, Joshua 8:30-35).

The Samaritans were a people rejected by the Jews of the New Testament. Some theologians understand them to be the descendants of the Northern Kingdom from the Old Testament, who were exiled and destroyed by the Assyrians in 722BC. While the Southern Kingdom worshiped in their capital city in Jerusalem, the Northern Kingdom worshipped in their capital city in Samaria (1 Kings 16:24), thereby potentially bringing forth the New Testament Samaritans. Others understand them to be racially Jew and Gentile mixed people who were descendants of the Israelites left behind after the Assyrian exile (2 Kings 17:24-40). Though connected to the Jews by family origin, the Samaritans were despised by the Jews, and the Jewish people were told to avoid them at all costs. To make matters worse, the Samaritans defiled the Jewish temple court on one Jewish Passover, which sealed the hostility between the two.

**Discuss why you believe Jesus would choose a dishonorable person who society looks down upon to do a noble act.**

Religion is about having information, but Jesus is calling out not being able to apply that information. Heart knowledge is necessary to live out what God desires, not only head knowledge. The Samaritan shows us what it means to understand to the point of application. Compassion, which religion often lacks, is necessary to move us from sympathy to empathy. Empathy is not just feeling sorry for someone. It is willingly placing yourself in someone's situation and thinking about how you would want others to respond. Compassion also deals with the actual felt pain. Religion often knows the right things to say and not the right things to do. Thus, one must go beyond just praying for someone or encouraging them with a scripture. They must recognize the obvious problems and bring aid to their wounds.

**Share ways you have seen religious people (church folks, campus ministries, etc.) ignoring obvious hurt, pain, and suffering, instead of bringing the healing expected by the sufferer.**

*Religious hurt prevents many from seeing the beauty of Jesus's desire for all to receive and experience His love and mercy. When questioned about who one should treat as his neighbor, Jesus used the story of a marginalized and rejected person as the symbol of what it means to truly live out His desires for His followers. We invite you to enter into the text with an honest awareness of who you may be in the story, and open yourself to receive the mercy extended to both the religious leader and the man who was beaten.*

## READ

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.
"Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26
"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" 27
He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and
with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your
mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" 28 "You have
answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." 29
But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is
my neighbor?"

30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to
Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him
half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the
other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a
Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him
and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an
inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,'
he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expenses you may have.'

36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" 37 The expert
in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

## DISCUSS

- When Jesus was first asked about the greatest of the Law of Moses (Matthew 22:34-40), He quickly pointed to love for God and for one's neighbor as the foundation upon which all the other laws were based. This religious leader appeared to understand the importance of this love, based on his response. However, when he tried to question the identity of his neighbor, he showed his real intentions in questioning Jesus. The leader's focus was on not making sure he lived his life in a way that pleased God and drew others to the Lord; instead, the leader was trying to limit who he was required to love. Religious people at times try to use scripture to justify themselves, even when they know their actions are not aligned with what the Lord desires. **Why might the religious leader be trying to look to Jesus to justify who he is to love? Who have you overlooked or rejected through your own justifications?**

- The victim was going from Jerusalem, the religious epicenter for the Jews, to Jericho. Thus, it is reasonable to assume this was a Jewish man who was attacked. Also, considering he was coming from Jerusalem, it is possible that both the priest and Levite in the story attended the same worship service earlier that day. View yourself as the stripped one (meaning you are naked), who is experiencing a beat down at the hand of strangers. You are lying half dead, and your beat down has exacerbated you psychologically and emotionally because those who are supposed to help, instead, ignore you. **Discuss your thoughts and feelings in this moment as you identify with the beaten man.**

- As a Jewish man, the expectation of those hearing this story would be for the priest or Levite to provide assistance. Yet both men completely separate themselves from the situation by crossing to the other side of the road and continuing their journey. The Law says anyone who touches a human corpse will themselves be

unclean for seven days (Number 19:11). Thus, if these religious people tried to assist the man and he was dead, they would be unable to worship or connect with their community for a week. **Taking the Law and the people's positions into consideration, do you think the priest and Levite are justified in their actions? Why or why not? Knowing the Law of Moses given by God the Father in the Old Testament, why would Jesus use the priest's and Levite's responses as an example of what not to do? Identify some marginalized people whom the church, today or throughout history, has justified as ignorable or avoidable. How could Jesus's parable bring healing to the marginalized beat down by religious hurt?**

- Imagine the greatest level of racial hostility between two people groups, and then multiply it to the highest level plausible. This high level of hatred would best describe the hate between the Samaritans and the Jews. However, even with this high level of hostility, it was the one who the beaten Jewish man would have also called enemy that showed the man mercy. Mercy as modeled by the Samaritan, included both compassion (what would I want someone to do for me) and presence (caring enough to see the other person better even at one's own expense). The Samaritan came to him, saw him, took pity on him, bandaged him, anointed him, and took care of him with no limitations. **Consider one of the people you identified above as someone you have overlooked or rejected. What would it look like to show both compassion and be present for them in a time of pain and suffering?**

- Whereas the religious people viewed their "brother" as someone who would cause them to be unclean and outcasted from the community, the Samaritan viewed his "enemy" as someone who was his neighbor that needed his love. The Samaritan went over and above in making sure the man was restored to full health. The victim, as a result, felt cared for as a person to the point where not only was his health restored, but also his humanity. **If you identify most with the beaten down man in this parable, how might others love on you in a way where you experience total restoration for your mind, body, spirit, and soul? If you identify with religious leaders in this story, how might God be inviting you to recognize everyone as your neighbor to whom you must show love? As we practice what Jesus really preached, how can we use this parable to rewrite what it looks like to be a loving and merciful follower of Jesus?**

## RESPOND

*We invite you to respond in a way that speaks to transformation and affirmation of Black culture, turns your attention to your Black campus community, and focuses on your impact on your home community.*

Deculturalization is the stripping or removing of one's culture (i.e. connections to their homeland, their language, their sense of knowing God, and ultimately their identity). The culture was not only stripped, but Black people were beaten through the infliction of a toxic culture that is the polar opposite of where we came from. We see the effects of this with Black people all around the world, on our campus, and in our home environments. Jesus desires for our people to experience total restoration through His love and mercy. This requires us not to ignore the wounded and beaten, like the religious priest and Levite, but to be present and show compassion like the Samaritan.

As we recognize the stripping and beating done within **Black culture**, below is an identification of the results from stripping Black culture and an opportunity to consider a response in alignment with the Samaritan's response in the passage.

African culture is about oneness and deep relational connections, but slavery destroyed the concept of family and divided us by elevating the need to compete for the master's attention. This led to infighting, separation, and individuality. To add insult to injury, those who professed to be religious did not help and often added to the suffering, causing many black people today to reject Christianity.

Integration and Colonization in black communities around the world turned the focus of black people from wanting to be included in all spaces to completely losing our connection with our own communities. We took more pride in being assimilated into the dominant culture and ran away to the majority who was imposing the stripping and beating.

African Americans moved out of the historically black neighborhoods, abandoned the historically black sports leagues, enrolled outside historically black schools, and turned away from historically black businesses.

Africans thought the majority values were better than theirs to the point that they became embarrassed or began to devalue their own culture. As a result, many of their athletes play in leagues outside their home country, their educated strive to go to colleges and universities outside their home country, and their differences were magnified, bringing forth tribalism.

Having our rooted culture removed, polluted, and/or destroyed, has left many Black people around the world searching for a restoration of their humanity. **Discuss the Samaritan response which could bring corrective action to the pain inflicted on Black culture around the world.**

As we recognize the stripping and beating done to **Black college students and/or faculty**, below is an identification of examples of how we beat one another within the Black community on campus and an opportunity to consider a response in alignment with the Samaritan's response in the passage.

Rape Culture - women (and sometimes men) who are the victims in most cases, and yet many people try to justify the offender and vilify the victim

Greek Culture - prospects for various organizations who, when the wrong personalities are running things, take away one's desire to want to do things by compromising one's principles

Academic Culture - students who are treated by their professor in a way whereby they feel inadequate to participate in college courses

Religious Culture - one who does religious things in religious spaces very well, but when it comes to living out what you were praising about, you aren't very productive

Black campus culture is disrupted from every angle including in student's relationships, social/community service connections, educational requirements, and spiritual life. **Discuss the Samaritan response for each category where one has compassion on the individuals beat down in these areas and are shown mercy.**

As we recognize the stripping and beating done to our **home community**, below is an identification of some people needing our presence and compassion in our families and an opportunity to consider a response in alignment with the Samaritan's response in the passage.

Black Sheep of the Family (i.e. LGBTQIA, alcoholics, non-believers, addicts, etc.)

Single Mothers/Incarcerated Fathers

People "Not" Living up to Family Expectations

Those we have justified as being non-neighbors for our own reasons are most in need of God's love and mercy. **Discuss the Samaritan response where one brings healing to the felt need of the pain and suffering this person may be experiencing.**

## CLOSE (PARTICIPANT RESPONSE & REFLECT)

Assess who is in your current "Neighbor" circle. Considering who is inside and outside your circle, in what ways is God inviting you to challenge how you love others? In an effort to practice what Jesus REALLY preached, pick one person (or people group) who you justified as not being your neighbor. Identify one act of compassion or presence you will complete for them this week. Detail what you will do and then spend some time reflecting on the lesson as one source of encouragement for your follow-through.

## Assess Where You Are
"The Necessity of Good Soil"
Luke 8:4-15 (New International Version)

## CONSIDER

As we prepare to discuss the scripture today, we acknowledge that some may question the credibility of the farmer who is sharing by planting the seed and the seed itself that is being planted in the different soil.

Consider the people who have shared religious things during your personal experiences. **Share positive and/or negative experiences you personally had during your interactions with religious leaders.**

Now consider your trust in the Word of God being shared. **In what ways has popular culture and different world religions affected your VIEW of accepting God's Holy Scriptures as the Word of God?**

This story uses the language of culture. At this time agriculture dominated everyone's world view. Here Jesus uses an agricultural analogy to talk about the heart condition of those following after Him. We all have negativity within our own lives that could affect our ability to understand the truth we are trying to receive if we are not careful.

**Consider your own interactions with scripture, religion, church, faith in Jesus to heal or provide, campus based ministries, spiritual leaders, etc. Share about how those interactions have affected your willingness to receive the word of God.**

*Our personal journeys with spiritual matters differ based on upbringing, new insights, doubts, etc. We believe all scripture has some truths we can discover even if we question its credibility. We invite you to enter the text having a posture that both the farmer and seed are credible, and that there are applicable truths you can received from this particular scripture.*

## READ

4 While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus
from town after town, he told this parable: 5 "A farmer went out to sow
his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was
trampled on, and the birds ate it up. 6 Some fell on rocky ground, and
when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture.
7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the
plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a
hundred times more than was sown."

When he said this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

9 His disciples asked him what this parable meant. 10 He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,"'though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.'

11 "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13 Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. 14 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. 15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

## DISCUSS

- As the seed was sowed, it was not the seed itself that differed, but instead the soil types that varied. Verse 11 identifies the seed as the word of God, while the rest of the parable presents four different soils types. These soil types are no soil or the path, rocky soil, thorny soil, and good soil. Each soil type represents the hearts of the various people hearing the teachings from Jesus. **What draws us to sometimes search for other outlets of truth?**

- Jesus's audience that day included His twelve disciples and the crowds of people representing every soil type presented in this parable. All who followed Jesus throughout His ministry continued to hear the SAME words from Jesus, but their resulting actions differed based on their heart condition. **In your own words, describe what happens to the seed when planted in each soil type. Share examples of times your heart condition was a representation of the different soil types.**

- When you consider the analogy to agriculture, the reality is all soil can become good soil. With the right tool you can break up the shallow soil, remove the rocks from the rocky soil, and pull the weeds from the thorny soil, making each soil fertile for planting and producing. Maybe as thorny soil your anxiety caused you to run in fear from what God was calling you to do. In response you are using the tool of counseling to dig up the weeds choking the life out of you. **Using your past soil type stories shared and the example given, identify a "tool" that could have turned your unproductive soil good.**

- Jesus desired for people to hear His word and respond in a way that allowed for crop production. **What does it look like to multiply what we receive from the Lord? During your interactions with others, why is it important to remember that they also have different heart soil types?**

- Unfortunately large crowds continued to gather, but only few had fertile hearts ready to produce. **How would it transform your life and the lives of those around you to have a heart ready for produce at all times?**

## RESPOND

*We invite for you to respond in a way that speaks to transformation and affirmation of Black culture, turns your attention to the Black community on your campus, and focuses on your impact to your home community.*

Jesus's hope is that all of His followers would be good soil. This, however, is not automatic. To be good soil, we must first assess our current realities, identity which soil type we are, choose the proper tool(s) to create a more fertile soil, and then allow the tool to do its work. Today we want to consider the unproductive soils within black culture, our black campus community, and our home community and discuss ways we might help to turn the soil good.

As we recognize the necessity of good soil within **Black culture** to allow for for productivity, below is an assessment and examples of each soil type as it relates to Black culture.

Path Soil: One devil that chokes up the seed within black culture is the perversion of Christianity through colonialism.

Rocky Soil: The time of testing causing some to fall away is most evident when the threat of repercussion causes individuals to shrink away from sharing the truth.

- Non-Black roommate/friend may make a hardcore statement about something in the black community. When you have the opportunity to say something, the cost of jeopardizing the connection causes you fall away from giving the truth you have received.
- Blasting stuff on social media and trump sprayed painted all over campus. You know this is an issue but choose to fight seemingly easy religious values like sin and fall away from dealing with the issue of injustice which is connected to a holistic view of scripture.

Thorny Soil: When health and wealth gospel ties one's faith in God solely on perceived blessings through one's material possessions, it makes it hard to feel as though you have connection to God when you don't have things. For many, even outside the realm of church and spirituality, our value in black culture is tied to materialism. All of these things choke us up and prevents maturation.

Colonialism, the threat of repercussion, and materialism has normalized being dysfunctional as our culture. **Discuss what truths we need to believe about the black community to allow for us to become more productive as a people.**

As we recognize the necessity of good soil within **Black college students and/or faculty** to allow for productivity, below is an assessment/example of each soil as it relates to the Black campus community.

Path Soil: One devil that chokes up the seed within the black campus community is anti-scriptural sentiments one receives from professors, classwork, websites, social media, friends, youtube, etc.

Rocky Soil: The time of testing causing some to fall away is most evident with the fear of rejection which causes individuals to shrink away from truth.

- Rejection from Friends
- Rejection from Organizations
- Rejection from Other Campus Ministries

Thorny Soil: The pressures from life's responsibilities can push one to become distracted from that which could advance the Black voice in spaces it is most needed on campus.

- Responsibility of providing financially for you and/or your family
- Responsibility of being a solid or effective Black leader on a campus where you are being pulled by so many different organizations
- Responsibility of being the first person in your family to go and/or graduate from college

Anti-scriptural sentiments, fear of rejection, and personal responsibility has slowed our Christian voice within the black campus community. **Discuss how our black campus community suffers with the absence of our prophetic voice.**

As we recognize the necessity of good soil within our **home community** to allow for productivity, below is an assessment and examples of each soil type as it relates to Black culture.

Path Soil: One devil that chokes up the seed within our homes could be the people that know you most who use who you were with them in the past to justify why they don't want to be influenced by you.

Rocky Soil: The time of testing causing some to fall away is most evident when the lack of information causes individuals to shrink away from the truth.

Thorny Soil: When guilt arises from regret of personal actions, it can stunt your growth and pull you away from wanting to be an influence.

- Guilt from falling to temptations
- Guilt from not making the most of an opportunity
- Guilt from letting your family down due to poor academics, decisions you made, etc.

People who know you, lack of information, and guilt can frustrate your desire to influence your home communities. **Discuss methods of communal accountability for personal affirmation to strengthen your witness as you invest in your home community.**

## CLOSE (PARTICIPANT RESPONSE & REFLECT)

Assess your current reality. Which soil type best describes where your heart is right now? What tools might God be inviting you to consider using? What next step can you take over the next week to allow the proper tool to create a more fertile good soil ready to receive from the Lord?

# Avoid Wasting God's Good
## "Using Your Gifts to Bring Great Impact"
## Matthew 25:14-30 (New International Version)

## CONSIDER

As we prepare to discuss the scripture today, we acknowledge the language of master and servant may cause tension with receiving the message of the text.

The master and servant in this passage is similar to the relationship between an employee and employer NOT the master and servant similar to American slavery. Slavery in the time of the Bible was because of war or debts owed and there always an ending date in sight. American slavery, however, is the only form of slavery where people became human property forever.

**Discuss what it looks like to have a healthy employee/employer relationship by considering both the employee and employer.**

It is important to realize you have been given gifts by God the creator in the form of your money, your talent, and your time. This story highlights honoring the gift giver by being good stewards of our money, talent, and time.

In the age of social media, it is very easy for us to waste hours scrolling through news feeds or posting. We miss the opportunity to be present because we are trying to take pictures or make comments for our next post.

In a desire to gain status, it is very easy for us to waste money on self-esteem items. We purchase things under the assumption that it adds value to who we are.

In a push to protect ourselves, it is very easy for us to allow fear to keep us from utilizing our gifts. We may know that we have the talents or skills to better ourselves, our community, and our networks, but we hide them.

**Discuss what aspects of our culture, campus, and community have suffered because we have not been good stewards of our money, talent, and time.**

*There is value not only in what we have been given, but also in the one who entrust us with their good things. When we choose to NOT waste our gifts, we honor the gift giver. We invite you to enter the text by considering how the actions of the workers not only benefited themselves, but it also benefited their boss who entrusted them with their valuables.*

## READ

14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. 15 To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. 17 So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. 18 But the man who had received one bag 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. 20 The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. 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 two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; 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 one bag of gold 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. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold 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? 27 Well 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 “‘So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. 29 For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

## DISCUSS

- Jesus used four different parables to teach his disciples to prepare for his ultimate return in the End Times. This fourth parable focuses on the responses of a master to his three servants who were given bags of money for while he was away. In this teaching, Jesus is analogous to the master, the servants are those who claim to be His followers, and the bags of money are something one considers to have value. **Why do you think the boss gave the money amounts based on the servants’ abilities and not the servants’ potential? What could be the gain or loss for the master based on how much he gave each servant?**

- Because the master settled accounts with the servants upon his return, his giving them money shows he was making an investment with his valuables. The Lord invests in His people by His actions, His communication through the Scriptures, His healing mentally or spiritually, His provisions financially or relationally, all of these and more are valuables the Lord shares with us. **What are valuables you received from the Lord? What makes them valuable?**

- When someone makes an investment, the goal is a bigger return in the end. Two of the servants utilized their gifts, skills, and abilities to bring the master a double return on his investment. The other servant chose to bury the investment giving his master no return. Similar to the parable the Lord expects his servants to utilize their gifts like intercession or teaching, skills like public speaking or creating ideas, and abilities like singing or drawing, as avenues to bring Him a return. A return for the Lord is seeing more people have a relationship with Him or seeing more people experience Christ on earth. **How should you use your gifts, skills, and abilities to bring the Lord a return? How does His investment in you ultimately grow His kingdom?**

- The two servants who doubled the investment were extended the same sentiments of gratitude in response (v. 21 and 23). This shows it is not about how much the master benefits, but instead how much effort the servant puts in using their gifts to be a blessing. **If the Lord asked you today for an account of what you have done with His investment in you, would He have the same response? Why or why not? What can you do to further grow His investment in you as it relates to serving on your college campus?**

- Because of the lack of banks in that time, many people buried their valuables for safe keeping. The servant's decision to bury the money confirms his understanding of the value of his master's investment. Yet, either the servant's self-identified fear, laziness as suggested by the master, or both caused him to waste the investment in him. As a result his money was taken from him and given to the servant who now had ten bags. **Why is it important to realize the servant's decision not to use his gifts was a result of fear and/or laziness? How might God's purposes in you not be fulfilled because He chooses to use someone else? Using the master's responses as an indicator of how the Lord might respond, write three ways you will avoid allowing fear and/ or laziness to cause you to waste God's investment in you.**

# RESPOND

*We invite for you to respond in a way that speaks to transformation and affirmation of black culture, turns your attention to the black community on your campus, and focuses on impact to your home community.*

The servant considered by the master as wicked and lazy in the story missed out on the opportunity to grow what was entrusted to him by the master. In the end he was condemned and the faithful servant was blessed by the master with even more goods.

Misuse of our talents within **Black culture** has devalued the beauty of blackness as opposed to adding value. Consider some of the following acknowledgements of how the culture has been devalued and discuss the questions given below.

> Black heroes of the past were Black inventors and now we are promoting others who have advanced themselves in less honorable ways. Black poets of the past have shaped our culture where they articulated what Black people during their time were experiencing, but now poetry through many musical artist are using poetry to promote negative stereotypes connected to Black people predominantly by others (i.e. Billy Holiday - Strange Fruit vs Cardi B - Overly Sexualized Black Women). Historically male slaves were called studs and were told they couldn't form relationships with women, instead they were only good for impregnating them. In America this was to create more slaves. In Africa this was for deception to convince men that they are not a warrior, provider, protector, nor do they have a history prior to colonization. **Why do we continually allow the majority to repackage old ideas and stereotypes about black people through our talents and convince us that this is our culture?**
>
> You are only as strong as your mother country and your connection to your mother country/continent. To realize Africa is filled with talent and is the wealthiest continent when it comes to natural resources would be a game change for Black people all over the world. **How do you convince a people group who are on the wealthiest continent in the world (evidenced by the many countries who take from it) that they are the poorest?**

Fear connected to **Black college students and/or faculty** using their talents have robbed the campus community of the potential impact of this hidden voice. Consider some of the following acknowledgements of how Black college students and/or faculty have been in hiding and discuss the questions given below.

> Black students are often afraid to use their talents in a positive way because ratchedness is popularized. Thus they shy away from utilizing their gifts to promote things that are righteous. **How would your campus experience the creativity and power of black thought and giftedness if black students understood the greatness that has been entrusted to them by God our Creator?**
>
> At time there appears to be a struggle within the Black community around unified talent vs competitive talent. Often time Black students use their talents to sabotage each other or to tear each other apart instead of developing a collective front. **How would it strengthen the impact of black students, faculty, organizations, or efforts on our campus if we found ways to unify our talents to advance the desires of the black campus community?**

Failure to recognize the importance of the blessing one can be to their **home community by utilizing their talents to bring growth causes great dishonor your gift givers**. Consider some of the following acknowledgements of contradicting attitudes which brings forth dishonor and discuss the questions given below.

> Arrogance vs Humility. When we return home, the educated often have a deep seated arrogance against those who haven't had the social and cultural experience of college life. **How do you take your talents, gifts, and education back to your community in a way that it doesn't push away, but empowers those around you?**
>
> Getting Out vs Going Back. When we have finished our schooling, often times we choose to avoid the places that got us to where we are. Thus we have no desire to go back to our neighborhoods, schools, or churches that we may view as "lesser." Christ's invitation for us is to go to the least of these. **How does it dishonor God our Provider who blessed us with this opportunities when we choose to forget those that our gifts may bless?**

## CLOSE (PARTICIPANT RESPONSE & REFLECT)

Assess what God has entrusted you with. Take some time to meditate on all of your responses. Conclude by writing a letter of action to God. Share your acknowledgment of the valuable things from the Lord, your gratitude for the ways He invests in you, your confession of the times you wasted God's valuables due to your fear, laziness, etc., and your intentions for using your gifts, skills, and abilities to grow God's kingdom. How will you use the next week to avoid wasting God's good to bring a greater impact within your spheres of influence?