

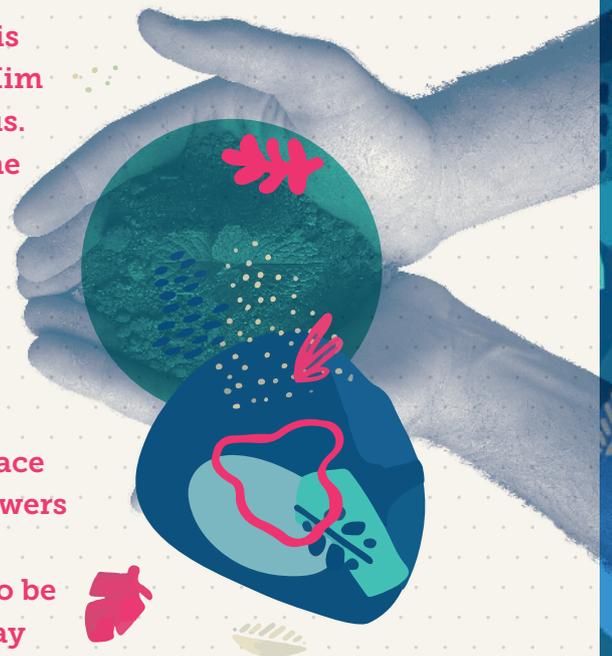
FOUR SESSION BIBLE STUDY

Grow
where
you're
planted,
sow where
He calls.

Each of us are planted in a particular place and community. Here, wherever we are, God is calling us to grow in Him and in likeness of Jesus. We are to commit to the community we are planted in, sowing into it and the lives of the people around us. However, this doesn't mean God will keep us planted in the same place forever. As active followers of Jesus, seeking His leading and growing to be more like Him... we may just find ourselves being called elsewhere or to sow into another community.

In this four session series, Lisa West-Newman explores the theme of 'Grow where you're planted, sow where He calls.' This Bible study reflects on passages of scripture alongside a powerful video series that shares the stories of local believers one of our cross-cultural teams is journeying with.

Lisa, and her husband Steve, served with the Global Interaction team in Cambodia for nine years and Lisa is now the QLD Young Adults Consultant.



SESSION ONE

grow

I confess that I am an avid people watcher – I find the incredible diversity of people intriguing. However, it is the similarities between parents and children that I find most delightful. Beyond the “you’ve got your grandmother’s nose” kind of similarities, I love seeing how a young woman and her mother will dress similarly, or a young boy’s haircut will match his father’s. And even more than that, how families will express themselves in the same way or develop the same mannerisms. Whether it is conscious or unconscious, we model ourselves on those we look up to (or at least, spend the most time with).

In the same way, through being a follower of Jesus and spending lots of time with Him, we will naturally become more like Him. And, in a world desperate for Jesus, that is a beautiful thing.

Watch: Episode 1 – Grow Your Heart

 www.globalinteraction.org.au/GrowSow

Discuss:

- > What was it that opened Mae Ran’s heart to Jesus?
- > In what ways has Mae Ran grown since becoming a follower of Jesus?
- > What difficulties does Mae Ran face that make life challenging? How may this impact her growth?
- > Mae Ran now wants all people to know God. What is it that she wants them to know about God?

Luke 6:17-49

Read through the teachings of Jesus found in Luke 6:17-49. As you read, consider what these words might also mean to Mae Ran.

In these verses:

- > Jesus teaches His disciples that the poor, hungry, miserable and insulted are blessed, while woe is coming to the rich, well-fed, happy and respected.
- > Enemies are to be loved as they themselves would like to be loved, doing good to them and even lending to them without expectation of repayment.
- > Instead of judging others, we must learn to forgive and walk humbly ourselves.
- > A life that is being changed by Jesus will produce good fruit (i.e. a student will become like the teacher, if they listen to the teachings of Jesus and put them into practice).

Reflect:

- > In what ways have you seen Jesus grow and change you? Or what kind of person would you be if you had never met Jesus?
- > How do your actions and attitudes impact the people around you who don’t know Jesus?
- > As you read through the teachings, what stood out to you as something that God may want you to continue to grow in?

Act:

- > Take the verse (or verses) that have challenged you, write it down and keep it in a prominent place this week, asking God to help you to live as He desires.
- > Commit to one act that you will do this week as a result of this study (e.g. change your life goal from seeking happiness to being obedient; show kindness to someone you find hard to love; call yourself out when you are judging others; commit to reading the Word.)
- > Pray for Mae Ran, that her life and testimony would resonate throughout her village and beyond. Pray also that God would continue to shape and grow her heart.

SESSION TWO

planted

Keen to grow an edible garden, I purchased a number of fruit trees for our backyard that suited our sub-tropical climate. My friend Google told me I needed to prepare the soil for each tree in spots where they had the best chance of thriving. For the citrus trees, I was instructed to make sure the ground didn't retain water and test the location before planting in it. So, I did test the hole and in testing it, found it wasn't suitable.

Others might have seen this as a prompt to reconsider the positioning of the plant... but not!! I ignored the advice, planted my poor lemon tree there and watched it die within the year. I did not take the attributes of soil and the preparation of the tree seriously.

In cross-cultural work, we ignore the context to our own peril. A faith grown under protected, nursery-like conditions, a faith that isn't prepared for the soil of another location, is unlikely to transplant well. Locations like Thailand have been largely resistant to the Gospel for many years with foreign-grown church styles failing to thrive. Global Interaction is seeking to empower communities of Ethnic Thai believers to develop their own distinctive way of following Jesus – in ways that can thrive in the Ethnic Thai context because they have grown out of it.

Watch: Episode 2 – Where you are Planted

 www.globalinteraction.org.au/GrowSow

Discuss:

- > A clear understanding of the differences between Buddha and Jesus was very important for Nan Tong. What distinction between the two led Nan Tong to choose Jesus?
- > What things did Nan Tong mention that he appreciated about his fellowship and why he wanted others to join them?
- > How is Nan Tong's faith community different from your own?

Luke 8:4-15

Read through the parable of the soils and its explanation.

In these verses:

- > The farmer was sowing the seed of the Word of God into many different types of soil.
- > The four soils represent four responses to the Word.
- > Some people will be resistant; some will be open but their faith will wither under testing; others fail to mature in their faith due to distractions; and finally others will persevere and be incredibly fruitful.

Reflect:

- > What are the weeds (distractions) and rocks (obstacles) to the Gospel in the soil of our society? Which of these do you see in your own life and/or community?
- > What contrast between Jesus and the "gods" of our current context might be compelling to someone who is genuinely open to Jesus?
- > How does knowing that some soils will be resistant impact your witness?

Act:

- > Seek God for His direction on how we can better support one another in our faith community so that we can have a greater impact with those around us.
- > Ask God for the courage and wisdom to share His Word with one person this week in a way that is relevant to their lives. Share your experience with the group next week and learn from each other.



SESSION THREE

SOW

**“We come in peace!”
These are the words of a tall grey alien descending from its UFO. It raises its three-fingered hand to the growing crowd of terrified onlookers in a gesture of peace. Incredibly, it can already speak the local language.**

Despite our cringe response to the example of Christian crusaders, colonialists and current day social media 'warriors'... Jesus did instruct His disciples to go out. He told them to express a greeting of peace to prepare the way for His arrival in each village and town. This traditional Jewish greeting, “Shalom”, means more than an absence of war. Rather, it is a blessing for deep wholeness or completeness within that overflows outwards to others.

Watch: Episode 3 – Sow Where He Calls

 www.globalinteraction.org.au/GrowSow

Discuss:

- > What are the similarities between the two faiths mentioned that provide a bridge for developing relationships?
- > In this context, the perception of Christianity is tied to the perception of western society and it's overwhelmingly negative – we are seen as godless, boozing, promiscuous infidels. How is this work of Global Interaction communicating the Gospel more effectively in this potentially hostile environment?

Luke 10:1-24

Read the story of the sending out of the 72 disciples, two by two.

In these verses:

- > The disciples were sent in twos into towns where people were either ripe to hear about Jesus or ready to tear them apart.
- > With a greeting of “peace” they were to find a house where their greeting would be accepted and provide a place where they could heal and share about the Kingdom.
- > The rejection of the disciples by the town was equal to rejecting Jesus and would result in judgement that deeply grieved Jesus.
- > These unnamed disciples were faithful nobodies whom God delighted to minister through, rather than the wise and learned.

Reflect:

- > What evidence of wholistic ministry do you see in this passage (i.e. meeting physical and spiritual needs)?
- > The disciples were instructed not to get distracted along the road. Are there relationships that are distracting you from reaching the people of peace? And, are there potentially hostile people whom you avoid, but God may be preparing?
- > What does it mean for you to be sent out two by two as peace-bearers into your town? What can you learn from this in light of last week's efforts to share Jesus with someone?

Act:

- > As a peace-bearer, be on the look-out for the person of peace who may work alongside you, be waiting for the same bus, or someone you have been friends with for years. Ask for God's courage and wisdom for words that speak life.
- > Consider how you can be more connected with your local community in a way that demonstrates the Kingdom and builds relationships... and find a friend to sign up with! (Tip: find something you both enjoy as that will make all the difference.)



SESSION FOUR

called

My husband Steve and I had a pretty spectacular and somewhat supernatural calling to serve in Cambodia. As such, we could have been tempted to think we were something special. Except that once we were in Cambodia, we found other equally-called workers who had been prompted by nothing more than a desire to be obedient to Jesus' command to "...go make disciples...". It was by God's profound grace (not our awesomeness) that He made our call so clear we had no choice but to obey.

However, our mission or vocation was never our primary calling. Our first and primary calling is the call to follow Jesus.

Watch: Episode 4 – Milestones in Mission

 www.globalinteraction.org.au/GrowSow

Discuss:

- > "There's no retirement in serving my God." How does Paul describe his job? (Tip: it's the very next sentence!) Contrast this with how we might describe his work.
- > What sacrifices have Paul and his fellow believers made in order to follow Jesus? What cultural practices do they retain and redeem in order to express their faith in Jesus in culturally understandable ways?
- > In a context with many barriers to belief in Jesus, what is one way their local community is comfortable to ask for help?

Luke 9:18-27, 44-50, 57-62

Read through these passages where Jesus talks about the call to, and cost of, discipleship.

In these verses:

- > Jesus was correctly identified as the Messiah and warned them that he would be killed and then raised to life.
- > Discipleship would require denying oneself daily... but the disciples fought over who would be greatest.
- > Fitness for service in the kingdom was measured through single-minded obedience at the cost of comfort, wealth and family.

Reflect:

- > How easy (or otherwise) is it to be a follower of Jesus in your context? What sacrifices has Jesus asked of you to in order to follow Him?
- > How does this primary calling to follow Jesus impact your secondary calling to a vocation, place or people group?
- > Asking for prayer is a way the Ethnic Thai community accepts help from the believers. In what ways might your local community be comfortable to accept or seek "help" from your local church?

Act:

- > Ask Jesus to help you to count the cost daily, trust Him fully and encourage one another, so you will not be tempted to say "no" when following Him means going where you are uncomfortable.
- > Take some time out this week to reflect on how your work (or future work) is involved in building God's kingdom. (Check out www.theologyofwork.org for helpful resources in getting a better sense of your vocational calling).
- > Pray for the Ethnic Thai believers to be faithful in the face of opposition and reflectors of the God whom they follow.