

**Icebreaker:**

Can you think of a time when something in your life developed very slowly? Please share with your group.

**Read this week's scripture and discuss:**

1. Jesus says the mustard seed is the smallest of all the seeds. What aspects of Jesus' ministry or the Kingdom of God seem small?
2. In Genesis 2 and 3, the tree of life represents the presence of God. Why can a tree be a helpful image of God's presence?
3. In Mark's version of the parable (Mark 4:30-32), it says the mustard seed grows "so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." What do you think this means? Where have you found "shade" in your life?
4. Do you think society pressures you to make a big impact in the world? If so, in what ways?
5. When was a time you felt your faith was small and God used it?
6. Is there any lesson to be learned that Jesus didn't start his visible ministry until he was 30 years old (Luke 3:23)?

**Prayer:**

As you pray for one another, please pray for the following needs in our church family:

## prayer requests

> Prayers of healing for Regina Franks.

[The following are from ZPC's prayer calendar, which is available at the Welcome Center or at [zpc.org/prayer](http://zpc.org/prayer).]

- > Pray for Mark and Ruth McDowell as they bring the gospel to the people in the Philippines and as they glorify God by making disciples and planting churches.
- > May Kairos Prison Ministry bring the light, love and friendship of Jesus Christ into the lives of prisoners and their families. Help them accept God's forgiveness and learn they are loved.

While this is a short parable, it is powerful. God uses small things to build his kingdom. It also takes time to build the kingdom. As Americans, we want things to happen right now, and for them to be BIG! Yet God's ways are not our ways. Some things happen fast and are big, and other things in God's kingdom happen very slowly, in relationship, and may look small but in the end have eternal impact.

1. The mustard seed is the smallest seed. Jesus having a conversation with a tax collector, cooking a small breakfast of fish on the beach, stopping at a well to talk to a woman, sleeping on a boat during a storm, all these things seem small. For us, perhaps it's a conversation with a stranger or a friend, writing a note, making a phone call, being really present with someone when you don't want to be, not raising your voice in an argument, or remaining a non-anxious presence when things are tense.
2. Trees represent ongoing life. They need sunlight and "breath." They grow slowly over time. They produce fruit which we can eat to live. They change with the seasons, but keep living. Trees that keep living, that grow, that produce fruit that give life – they represent God.
3. The parable in Mark uses the phrase "so that." The mustard seed becomes a large bush, even a tree, so that birds can make nests in its shade. It does not just grow to get big. It has meaning and purpose. Things in the kingdom, that God does, that we are a part of, grow and have meaning and purpose. We can find shade in God's presence and in God's people and in God's promises.
4. Yes! Our culture, especially suburban American culture, rewards things that are big and grand and make us look at them. It can be tempting for the church to gravitate toward the huge event, the big outreach, the quick fix. Yet, the hard work of building relationships and growing in Christ takes time and sometimes looks small. May we build God's kingdom with God's guidance and help over time.
5. Have your group share when their faith was enough even though it was small. Be ready to go first if you need to do so. Some examples might be hammering a nail at a Habitat or Fuller Center house. Or answering that nudge from God's Spirit to reach out to someone in need. Or being obedient to what you sense God is calling you to do. Be ready to share something appropriately transparent from your own life.
6. There must have been some good reason for Jesus to wait until age 30. It was in God's timing, apparently. Perhaps Jesus had to be patient to wait for the right time to reveal himself and do his work. If Jesus can be patient and wait, and then have an eternal impact over three years, we can be patient as well.