



# TEXT MESSAGE

WestHills Church / December 4, 2011

## This Week's How To: Share

(Each week we highlight a specific biblical thought that helps us accomplish our God-given mission--we call them "How Tos".)

**Sin** – I share as I believe all people have a sin problem, which leads to death, and can only be overcome in belief in Christ. (Romans 3:23)

"All" is a word that is understandable. There is nothing confusing about *all*. It encompasses the entire unit of whatever is being measured.

*"All onions are nasty. They are the stench of kitchens and cafeterias everywhere. Vidalias, purple, sweet...all kinds are the devil's weed! You can probably imagine it now- Satan standing under the surface of the earth, shoving the worthless stink bulbs up into the ground. Recipes that call for onions are fine without them. There is no need for a foul-odor weed to accompany chili, to pile up with ham on bread, or to sit alongside a slice of heavenly cornbread and bowl of black-eyed peas. Father, please save our stuffing; deliver our salads and casseroles this holiday from the sin of onion that might enter into it and taint it."*

If this statement is considered to be a *true* statement, it would require that there be no other alternative. Truth is exclusive. And *truth* is very closely related to *all*. Obviously, not everyone would agree with the statement above about all onions. What Christians are saying about sin is that it is the *truth* about mankind's status with God, and that it is true about *all* of mankind. Based on what we believe to be true about sin, it is imperative we include ourselves when we share *all* have sinned. Any hint of nasty, stinking, foul-odor sin will be just as noticeable in our lives as it will be in the Thanksgiving dishes served in your home.

**Discussion:** You run into a friend at a high school reunion. As you catch up about life, the conversation swings to your old church group and the good times at summer camp. Your friend jokes aloud, "man, it would have been cool if all that talk about forgiveness and freedom over sin was true. I know I could use some of that now." How do you respond? How can we talk about sin and the remedy for it? Do our own personal struggles impact our willingness or ability to share truth?



## The Ultimate Makeover

Matthew 13:31-34

**Day 1: ENCOUNTER** God's word to put yourself in touch with Him.

### The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

<sup>31</sup> He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. <sup>32</sup> Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches." <sup>33</sup> He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough." <sup>34</sup> Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. <sup>35</sup> So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world."

## **Day 2: EXPLORE** the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

1. Who is the audience in the passage (10, 15-17)? Why is Jesus teaching the “great crowds” and the disciples in the same way?
2. Jesus used sowing and reaping (planting and harvesting) to describe the “Kingdom of Heaven”. What do those actions imply? Is this a helpful “word picture” for the disciples, for us?
3. Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a mustard seed. What are the characteristics of the mustard seed/tree? Is the size of the mustard seed important?
4. The size of the Kingdom is alluded to in the parable of the mustard seed. Why would this be important to know for the hearers then and for us now?
5. Who do you think the “birds of the air” are supposed to be?
6. What is leaven (yeast)? What function does it have with flour (dough)? What does the leaven and dough represent?
7. Why would this comparison have made sense to the disciples? Who is the “woman” in the story (v. 33)?
8. So what do these two parables say about God’s Kingdom? What does it mean for us?
9. How much of the “Kingdom of Heaven” is work, and how much is waiting?
10. Discussion: How do the parable of mustard seed and the parable of the leaven affect our evangelism strategy? How do they affect our teaching and preaching strategies?

## **Day 3: EXAMINE** an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

**Main Idea of the Passage:** God has begun remaking this world into the age to come.

### **Parable of the Mustard Seed, 13:31-32**

In this parable, the kingdom of heaven was compared to the small mustard seed which became such a large plant that birds were able to lodge in its branches. This mustard plant is a species different than the common one used as a condiment. Although left without interpretation, it anticipated that Christendom as a sphere of profession will grow rapidly from a small beginning to an organization with great power and wealth. While the plant included both true believers and those who professed to believe, the mustard plant was distinguished from the birds lodging in its branches which were unbelievers (Dan 4:20-22). Some have noted that the mustard seed described as “the least of all seeds” is not actually the smallest seed, and that this is an error in the Scriptures. The answer is twofold. The Greek word translated “smallest” (*mikroteron*) is actually a comparative and should be translated “smaller,” as it is in the *New English Bible* and in the *New American Standard Bible*. The thought is that it is “very small.” Second, as Lenski points out, “Jesus is speaking of the seeds that were ordinarily planted in ancient gardens, hence the remark that botanists know about many seeds that are still smaller is pointless.”

### **Parable of the Leaven, 13:33-35**

In this parable, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto leaven hidden in meal (Lk 13:20-21). In biblical times, it was customary to retain a small portion of leavened dough from each batch to mix in with the next batch of dough, thereby leavening the new dough. In modern times, yeast is usually used. What does the leaven represent? It is more evident than ever in the last third of the twentieth century that the gospel has not permeated the whole world and that evil tends to

permeate the entire professing church, which is exactly what Matthew 13 teaches. In the parable, the meal represented that which is good, as it was made from wheat and not from tares. John Walvoord, bible.org

**Day Four: EMBRACE how God spoke to you through His word.**

Our desire is to not to be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week:

Journal your thoughts on the passage:

- Write about what God wants you to know...
  
- Write about how God wants you to feel...
  
- Write about what God wants you to do...

**“The Ultimate Makeover”** (use the provided space for sermon notes on Sunday’s message)

**Home Group Discussion** (for those involved in the deeper connections of a home group):

What is the Kingdom of God? How do we recognize it when we see it? Can you give any examples of the Kingdom of God on Earth?