



# OVERVIEW OF THRESHOLDS: HAVING EYES FOR GROWTH

Growing our awareness of how others have invested in us and how we can invest in others.

## HEAR THE WORD

### OVERVIEW:

Mark 4:26-29

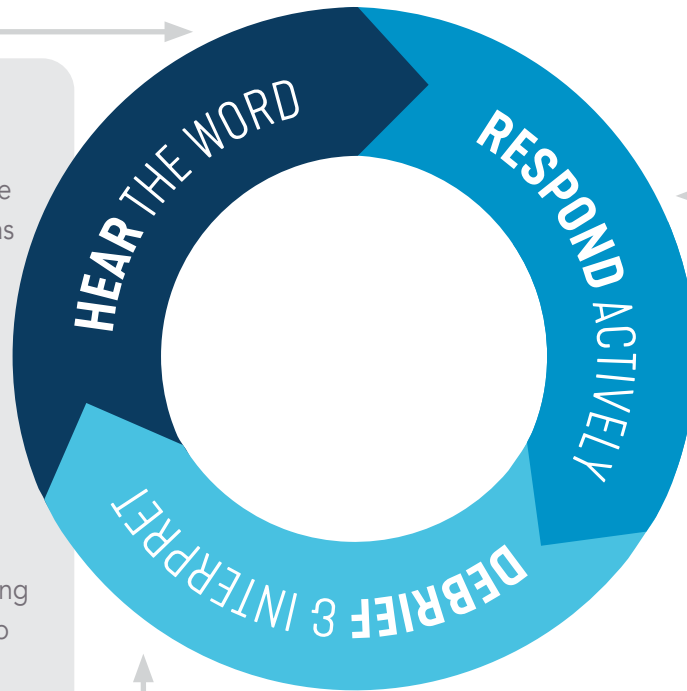
We are like the field and the seed in this parable. God has brought people alongside us at different phases of our growth to pray for us, encourage us, and challenge us. We want to grow in gratitude for and awareness of God's work in our lives and in the lives of those around us. Using the Thresholds, we can help others interpret their own stories.

### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- How is growth mysterious?
- How is growth a process?
- Describe one person in your life whom God has used to help you grow.
- Which of the Thresholds resonates with your own journey of faith? How do you connect with these themes?

In this series, we are going to consider how we might be used by God to be spiritual friends to those around us.

- How do you feel about the idea of being a spiritual friend?



## RESPOND ACTIVELY

### OVERVIEW:

This week we will work on telling our stories, especially in light of the 5 Thresholds. Think through your own story, and be prepared to model for your Small Group how to interpret your story using the language of the 5 Thresholds.

### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- Turn to your neighbor and tell your faith journey story.
- Tell someone else your story this week. Our stories can be used by God to encourage others.
- Next week we want to hear what you are learning about telling your story and being a spiritual friend.

## DEBRIEF & INTERPRET

### OVERVIEW:

Look for ways to help your Small Group members grow in story-telling this week. Maybe start a Facebook page for stories. During your debrief, ask them if they want your feedback on their story. See if you can use the Thresholds language to make their stories more accessible.

### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- What did you learn about telling your story?
- Where would you like some help in telling your story?



## TRUST

# FIRST THRESHOLD: GROWING AS TRUST-BUILDERS

Trust-building as the foundation of being a spiritual friend.

### HEAR THE WORD

#### OVERVIEW:

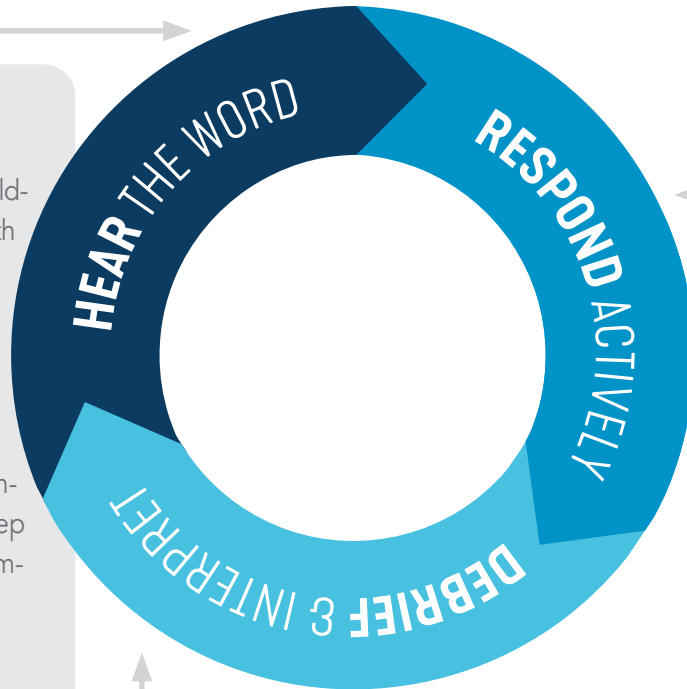
John 4:1-26

Jesus is the master trust-builder. He takes the initiative with the woman by starting a conversation and asking for help. Jesus is not defensive when she is skeptical.

Help your Small Group identify at least one practical step they can take toward becoming better trust-builders.

#### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- How does Jesus build trust with the woman?
- Many who don't know God's love need to trust a Jesus follower to move forward in the journey toward faith. Think about someone whom you have trust with. What did you do to build trust?
- How have Christians broken trust with others today and in history?
- What can you do to build trust with those around you who don't know God's love?



### DEBRIEF & INTERPRET

#### OVERVIEW:

Some people are natural at trust-building. Keep encouraging them. Others need help with basic conversation skills and overcoming fears and barriers. Help them be more friendly.

#### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- With whom on your prayer map did you try to build trust with? What did you do? What did you learn about yourself?
- How would you like help in growing as a trust-builder?

### RESPOND ACTIVELY

#### OVERVIEW:

Use prayer maps to see where each member can build trust. Have yours ready so your Small Group can see a practical example.

Teach the group how to do brief listening prayer for the people on their prayer map.

Help them name one practical step they can take this week.

#### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- Create a prayer map by writing down 3 or 4 networks where you have friends. Then write a few names near each network.
- Pray: God, please put the name of one friend on our hearts who does not know the love of God.
- Turn to your neighbor. Pray for each other, for the friend whom God brought to mind, and for an opportunity to build trust this week.



## SECOND THRESHOLD: BEING CURIOUS. STOKING CURIOSITY.

Asking good questions that help nudge people toward curiosity.

### CURIOUS

#### HEAR THE WORD

##### OVERVIEW:

John 3:1-15

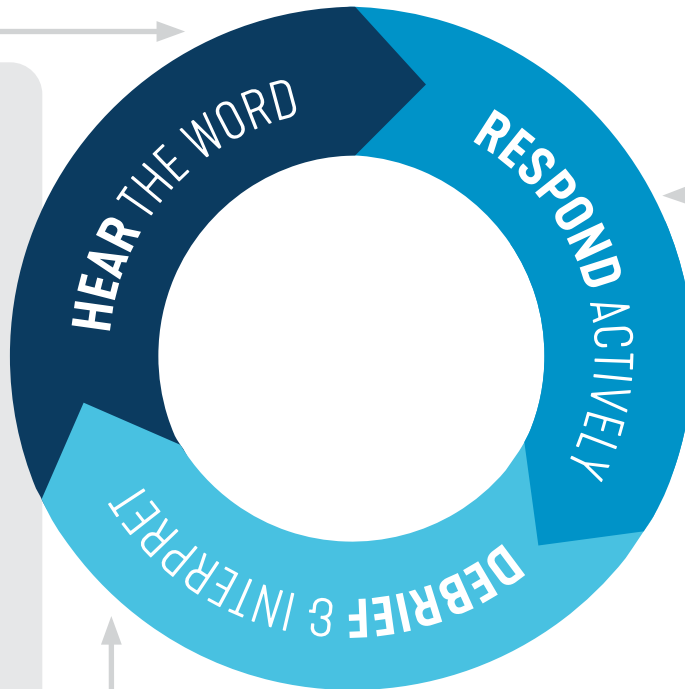
Nicodemus comes to Jesus expecting one kind of conversation. Jesus uses the moment creatively to help him become more curious. To Nicodemus's credit, instead of getting offended and silently stewing, he stays engaged with Jesus and exhibits some curiosity.

We can become better at encouraging curiosity if we work at it. You can help your Small Group with this.

##### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- How does Jesus nudge Nicodemus toward curiosity?
- What does "reborn" mean to Nicodemus? Why does Jesus use that imagery?
- What are some other ways that we can nudge our friends toward curiosity about Jesus?

Let's practice in pairs.



#### RESPOND ACTIVELY

##### OVERVIEW:

Some people will quickly learn how to spark curiosity. Others will struggle with it. Keep pointing them to Jesus and to the ways he encourages curiosity. Also, try this out yourself ahead of time so that you have a current story to share.

Remind folks to bring their prayer map, or have them quickly jot down another one.

Ask them to invite their friends to Small Group, explaining that it will help you all learn to welcome people of all perspectives.

##### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- Ask two people on your prayer map two questions. For example:
- as a starter question: "What's your spiritual background?"
  - as a follow-up question: "How does that play out for you today?"

Invite them to come with you to Small Group.

#### DEBRIEF & INTERPRET

##### OVERVIEW:

After you discuss how their question-asking went this week, help them brainstorm other preliminary and follow-up questions they might ask in the future.

Send out a text or Facebook message asking people to respond with their best stories as they try this out.

##### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- What did you do to stoke curiosity?
- What didn't go so well?
- Were you able to invite them to Small Group?
- How would you like help as you grow in sparking curiosity?



## THIRD THRESHOLD: BEING OPEN. INVITING OPENNESS.

Helping friends identify areas in their life where they want change.

### OPEN

#### HEAR THE WORD

##### OVERVIEW:

John 5:1-15

The man by the pool has been stuck in his rut for a long time. He thinks he is looking for change, but he has become complacent. He needs someone to lovingly challenge him to open up to change. Jesus does this masterfully.

Help your Small Group members become open to change. The more honest they can be with each other, the more it will help them with their curious friends.

The below list of 5 growth areas is first to help your Small Group members be more honest and specific themselves, and then, second, for them to use with their curious friends.

##### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

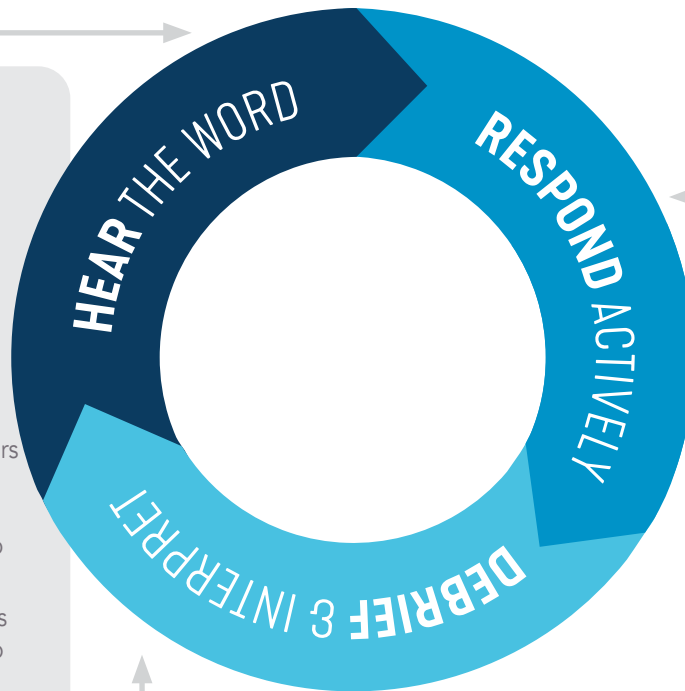
- How does Jesus help this man become open?

On this 3" x 5" card, write down these 5 things: Pick the area in your life where you most want to invite God to change you.

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Bitterness
- Anger
- Self-doubt

Invite God to go deeper. When do you feel this way? Why?

- Describe what your life would be like if you no longer struggled with this.
- What would it take for you to live differently?
- How can we help you?



#### DEBRIEF & INTERPRET

##### OVERVIEW:

Help your members see how their personal openness about their struggles can encourage their friends, in turn, to be open about struggles.

##### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- What are you learning about being a friend who can go deeper with people?
- How were you able to encourage openness in others?
- How are we growing in honesty as a small group community?

#### RESPOND ACTIVELY

##### OVERVIEW:

Some people can easily talk about their personal struggles. Others never do. This week is going to stretch members who are not very open about their personal lives.

Before you ask your Small Group members to go out and talk with their friends about the 5 growth areas, do it yourself first and then be ready to share how it went for you. (Don't forget to provide 3" x 5" cards.)

##### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

We want to become the type of people who can go deeper with our friends and talk about personal growth areas.

Take this same list to 2 people on your prayer map. You could say,

- Our small group is doing an informal survey about areas in our personal lives where we would like to see real change. Would you be willing to answer a few questions?
- Show them the 5 areas on your 3" x 5" card and ask them which area they most want God to change them in.
- You could also ask them how their life might be different if this area they picked changed. Be prepared to share your own answers as well.

If they're open, go deeper with them by asking:

- "Would you be open to inviting God to change this? May I pray that for you right now?"



## THRESHOLD 4: BEING SEEKERS. HELPING SEEKERS.

Helping people begin to intentionally seek Jesus.

### SEEKING

#### HEAR THE WORD

##### OVERVIEW:

Mark 10:46-52

Bart is a great seeker. He also faces a significant barrier. Jesus helps Bart name what he is seeking. We can do the same.

Author Video:

Testimony Video:

##### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- What does this passage show us about Jesus and how he helps seekers?
- How can we be like Bart?
- How can we help seekers overcome their obstacles to finding Jesus?
- What are you learning about seekers?



#### DEBRIEF & INTERPRET

##### OVERVIEW:

This may be challenging for your folks. Please check in each of the the 7 days, even if just by text. They may easily get stuck, confused, or discouraged that God didn't do what they hoped for.

##### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- How do you see God showing up for you? For your friend?

If they are stuck, help them interpret how they are learning to seek Jesus.

#### RESPOND ACTIVELY

##### OVERVIEW:

The 7-Day Prayer challenge is a practical opportunity to help our friends identify their deeper need for God. Have participants name a friend they will invite. Help them think about how to invite. Make sure they pray in person or via skype (not text). Help them ask deeper questions post-prayer.

The 7 day prayer challenge works 1-on-1, but it also is a great opportunity to invite other curious friends to join in.

##### SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTIONS:

We suggest you pray with your curious friends this way:

- "Jesus asks the blind man, 'What do you want me to do for you?' How about you? What do you want Jesus to do for you?" (Both of you pray honestly.)

After a few minutes, pray:

- "Jesus, teach us to seek you." Take a few minutes for (silent prayer).
- Share and pray together. Make sure to invite your friend to pray for you out loud as well.

Have a quick debrief with your friend:

- How were you aware of God's presence as we prayed?



# THRESHOLD 5: HELPING FRIENDS ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Inviting friends and opening the door for them to follow Jesus.

## FOLLOWING

### HEAR THE WORD

#### OVERVIEW:

John 4:27-42

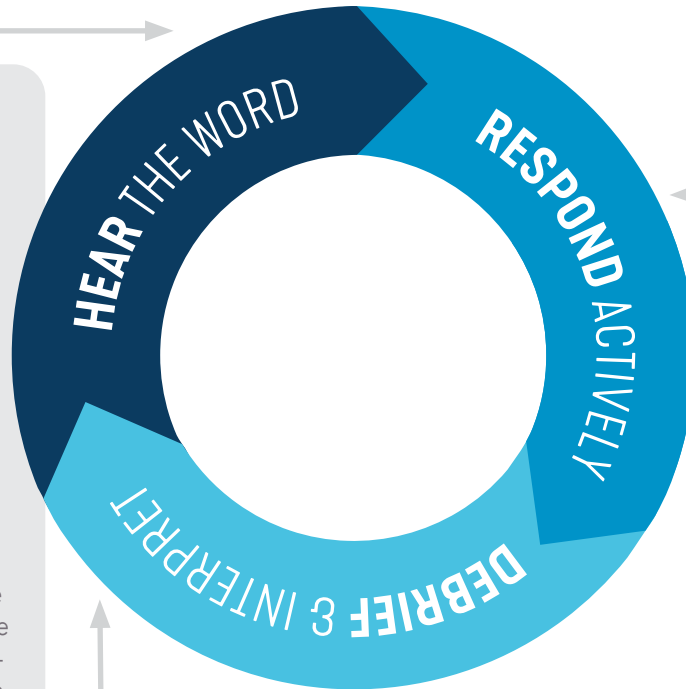
Jesus helps the village know him for themselves, not just through the woman's testimony. He wants us to experience him firsthand.

The biggest barrier for many people in becoming followers of Jesus is that they are never invited and don't know how to get started. We have the honor of helping remove this barrier by asking them if they would like to know Jesus for themselves.

We have provided a script (on the back) so that you can demonstrate how this is done. Practice the invitation out loud a few times before the Small Group meeting.

If you have never done this before in your Small Group, it might feel awkward. But it is important that you do it, even if there are no seekers in the group. You will courageously model something that makes some people uncomfortable. This is why we recommend you use the script (see back side). This has actually been tested with students in many parts of the country, and God has used it powerfully.

After you read the invitation, provide the group with a modified version, one that would work better in a 1-to-1 conversation. (This is also on the back.)



### RESPOND ACTIVELY

#### OVERVIEW:

At the end of Small Group, make sure you

- have people fill out a contact card so you know what happened for them and so you can follow up
- get an appointment with people who made new faith decisions
- meet 1-on-1 with them within the week

#### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

We need each others' help this week. Let's pick prayer partners to help each other follow through and pray for each other.

#### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- What does it mean for us to open our eyes to the harvest?
- Describe the process of conversion that the village members go through.
- What do you think it means that Jesus is the Messiah?

I want to create a space for us to actually respond to Jesus today.

[Read the invitation to faith.]

We not only want to be people who respond ourselves to Jesus, but we also want to be friends who help others consider Jesus. I am going to help you try this yourself. I know it might be a stretch.

Let me help you write out some talking points for a conversation with a friend.

### DEBRIEF & INTERPRET

#### OVERVIEW:

Celebrate the new faith decisions. You might throw a "new faith" party.

If you throw a party, invite the curious friends of the person who made the decision. And have the new believer share for a few minutes in front of everyone.

#### SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTIONS:

- Let's celebrate and remember the big and small ways God has been at work in us and through us!
- How is our Small Group different today from six weeks ago?



## SMALL GROUP LEADERS SCRIPT

### The Invitation

“We are a community that is striving to create space for us all to respond to God. Jesus invites us into a relationship with him, and into a story that is bigger than ourselves, all of which is made possible by what he did on the cross. At the cross, all the power of sin and death died with Jesus; all the debts owed have been paid. And because Jesus rose again, we can start over. A new life is possible. If you are ready to start a relationship with Jesus for the first time or if you want to come back to him and join his community in pursuing his purposes in the world, I would like to invite you to pray this prayer with me.

“God, I believe Jesus is your Son, the Savior of the world. I believe he died on the cross for me and took away all my sins, paying the cost for all of us. I believe in my heart that you raised Jesus from the dead and that he is alive today. I ask that you forgive me for the wrongs that I have done. I receive your forgiveness into my life. By faith I receive Jesus as King over every part of my life. Change me; make me the person you want me to be. I commit to be a member of your family on earth, pursuing your purposes and mission for the world. I give you my heart; I give you my life; I want to know you more! In Jesus’ name, amen.”

#### HELPING YOUR SMALL GROUP WRITE THEIR OWN TALKING POINTS

“Now I’d like to help you jot down some talking points for how this might go with your friend.” [Have them write down these sentence beginnings and then finish them.]

- I have loved our conversations about life and spiritual things and your question . . .
- I remember you said that you wish Jesus would . . .
- I think you would really like Jesus because . . .
- Have you ever considered becoming a follower of Jesus?
- Would you like to know how?
- Can I tell you what Jesus did for you on the cross?





Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Today I (Choose which best applies):

Made a Decision- I want to start following Jesus for the first time

Made a Decision- I have walked away and want to come back to God

I'm interested in (Please choose one):

Meeting with someone to talk about faith

I want to learn more about being a leader with InterVarsity this semester.



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