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***The Parable of the Soils - Growing Healthy Hearts***  
**Matthew 13:1-23; Zechariah 7-8; "The One Anothers"**  
**February 12, 2017, Jeff Germon**

We've spent the last five Sundays looking at one parable of Jesus called *The Parable of the Soils*. This is our final one. And actually, today we aren't even going to look at the parable, but we will talk about the principles in it.

In the parable, Jesus described four heart conditions. The growth in three of the hearts was severely stunted, or nonexistent because of hardness, shallowness, or distractions. Only one was the kind of heart that was ready to receive God's Word and produce fruit that would last; love, joy, peace....

God's desire, of course, is that we would all have that kind of heart. As we said last week, it won't happen by accident. We will need a plan.

For those of you who are gardeners, you know how difficult it is to grow a good garden. You can't just throw your seed on the ground indiscriminately and then go away and expect to come back in a couple months to healthy, flourishing vegetables or fruit. There might be a few lucky seeds that would germinate and produce, but the vast majority would not.

You know it takes work. You have to till the soil and make sure it has healthy fertilizer to feed it. You need to pick the rocks and make sure the soil is deep enough. You need to constantly pull the weeds. You have to water it just the right amount; not too much, and not too little. You need to keep pests and rodents away from it.

And then there are some things that are totally out of your control, like the amount of sun your garden gets, unless you have your garden in a green house and have artificial light. In order to grow a good garden hard work is necessary. And, there are also those things you need to leave to God. You don't actually produce the growth in the seed. God does. You simply do the right things so growth can happen.

It's the same in our spiritual lives. Getting our hearts to the place where they are healthy and growing, likewise takes a lot of work. We will not grow by accident. It will take effort on our part, focusing on the right things and cooperating with Jesus as we allow him to train us. That is what discipleship is.

Today what I want to talk about is creating a place at CRBC where this happens. If it won't happen by accident, it means we need to have a system in place to help us get in the way of God's grace so real growth will take place.

Last week I shared a visual to help us understand this, but I think I rushed through it, so I am going to walk through it a little slower this time.

Remember last week we read from 2 Peter 1 where Peter described how this growth happens. He said that we, as followers of Jesus must "***make every effort***" (those were his words) to cooperate with him to grow in maturity. Peter described the process and then said,

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***<sup>8</sup> The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.***

So, we need to remember why we have been saved. We have not been saved simply so we can go to heaven. If we cooperate with Jesus he will change to become more like him, in that we will be more filled with the fruit of the Spirit so we can love others better. But, he has not saved us simply so we can be more loving people sitting in our comfortable pews on Sunday morning.

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**He has saved us to change us into more loving people SO THAT, others would see Jesus in us and join us on our journey towards the heart of God.**

If you are counted as one of God's children, at some point in your life, you received the forgiveness of God. Not based on anything you did, but because you trusted in what *God* did by sacrificing his only Son to pay the penalty for your sins so you could have a relationship with the holy God, the Creator of everything.

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At the point where you trusted Jesus, he moved into your heart in some spiritual way. You were made right with God. When God looks at you, he does not see your sin. Instead, he sees the righteousness of Jesus. He sees you through the lens of the cross.

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Each of us will one day die, and if we have trusted Jesus we will join him in heaven. Or he will return before we die and take to heaven those who trust that his death paid the penalty for their sins.

The thing that is so easy to do is to stay stuck there and think this is all there is. The easy and very lazy thing for us to do is to think that God saved you simply so you would be saved — end of story. You have your ticket to heaven. That's all that matters. Now you can just coast and wait passively for Jesus.

That is so far from the truth. If we live like that we aren't really living. There will be no growth. The Gospel, or the Good News of Jesus goes much deeper than "Jesus died for my sins so I could go to heaven when I die."

God saved us to give us purpose — now. We have a reason for existing — now. He gives us meaning — now. He did not save us so we could just passively wait until we die so we can one day join Jesus in heaven.

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We are God's masterpiece, Ephesians 2:10 says. Now, watch what happens as we walk with Jesus each step of our lives and let him continually chip away at us so we become more and more like him. The hard ground is tilled making our hearts soft and ready to receive and grow. The rocks are picked so our roots can grow deep into God's love. The weeds of distraction are pulled so we become fully attentive to what Jesus is doing in and around us and join him in his project to redeem the world.

The result is a bountiful crop produced by the power of the Holy Spirit as we cooperate with Jesus. That is living the life he has called us to. That gives our life purpose and meaning. This is the way to live fruitful lives as we grow in the fruit of the Spirit. And then, as Jesus said in John 15, if we remain in him and he in us we will bear much fruit that will last for eternity.

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**We will not mature by accident.**

God's plan has always been that he would gather for himself a people who would bless the nations. That was God's call on Abraham's life in Genesis 12. His plan has never deviated from that.

Just over 500 years before Christ, God, through the prophet Zechariah, foretold of Jesus coming to redeem the world. Israel had just returned from being exiled by the Babylonians. The Israelites had excitedly started to rebuild the temple that had been demolished. They were soon met with severe opposition, so they only got as far as the foundation before giving up.

They had been reduced to a small remnant of what they had previously been. They got discouraged, and then distracted from the call of God on their lives. They became focused instead on the business of building up their *own* lives and houses and wealth. They completely forgot why God had delivered them, and why God had initially gathered the people of Israel. Discouragement kept them focused downward instead of upward.

As they focused downward, forgetting God's call, they lost sight of their mission and began to fight and squabble amongst themselves. They forgot who they were. God, through the prophet Zechariah reprimanded them, reminding them of their identity and calling them back, giving them a picture of what he would do through them if they trusted him and began acting in loving ways.

I am going to read chapters 7 and 8 to you in their entirety. I might make a few comments along the way, but mostly listen carefully for God's heart for his people. This is God's heart for us as well.

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### **Zechariah 7 (NLT)**

***<sup>1</sup> On December 7 of the fourth year of King Darius's reign, another message came to Zechariah from the Lord. <sup>2</sup> The people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regemmelech, along with their attendants, to seek the Lord's favor. <sup>3</sup> They were to ask this question of the prophets and the priests at the Temple of the Lord of Heaven's Armies: "Should we continue to mourn and fast each summer on the anniversary of the Temple's destruction, as we have done for so many years?"***

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***<sup>4</sup> The Lord of Heaven's Armies sent me this message in reply: <sup>5</sup> "Say to all your people and your priests, 'During these seventy years of exile, when you fasted and mourned in the summer and in early autumn, was it really for me that you were fasting?' <sup>6</sup> And even now in your holy festivals, aren't you eating and drinking just to please yourselves?***

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***<sup>7</sup> Isn't this the same message the Lord proclaimed through the prophets in years past when Jerusalem and the towns of Judah were bustling with people, and the Negev and the foothills of Judah were well populated?' " <sup>8</sup> Then this message came to Zechariah from the Lord: <sup>9</sup> "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: Judge fairly, and show mercy and kindness to one another.***

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***<sup>10</sup> Do not oppress widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor. And do not scheme against each other. <sup>11</sup> "Your ancestors refused to listen to this message. They stubbornly turned away and put their fingers in their ears to keep from hearing. <sup>12</sup> They made their hearts as hard as stone, so they could not hear the instructions or the messages that the Lord of Heaven's Armies had sent them by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. That is why the Lord of Heaven's Armies was so angry with them.***

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***<sup>13</sup> "Since they refused to listen when I called to them, I would not listen when they called to me, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. <sup>14</sup> As with a whirlwind, I scattered them among the distant nations, where they lived as strangers. Their land became so desolate that no one even traveled through it. They turned their pleasant land into a desert."***

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### **Zechariah 8 (NLT)**

***<sup>1</sup> Then another message came to me from the Lord of Heaven's Armies: <sup>2</sup> "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: My love for Mount Zion is passionate and strong; I am consumed with passion for Jerusalem! <sup>3</sup> "And now the Lord says: I am returning to Mount Zion, and I will live in***

**Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City; the mountain of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will be called the Holy Mountain.**

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**<sup>4</sup> "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: Once again old men and women will walk Jerusalem's streets with their canes and will sit together in the city squares. <sup>5</sup> And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls at play. <sup>6</sup> "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: All this may seem impossible to you now, a small remnant of God's people. But is it impossible for me? says the Lord of Heaven's Armies.**

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**<sup>7</sup> "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: You can be sure that I will rescue my people from the east and from the west. <sup>8</sup> I will bring them home again to live safely in Jerusalem. They will be my people, and I will be faithful and just toward them as their God. <sup>9</sup> "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: Be strong and finish the task! Ever since the laying of the foundation of the Temple of the Lord of Heaven's Armies, you have heard what the prophets have been saying about completing the building.**

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**<sup>10</sup> Before the work on the Temple began, there were no jobs and no money to hire people or animals. No traveler was safe from the enemy, for there were enemies on all sides. I had turned everyone against each other. <sup>11</sup> "But now I will not treat the remnant of my people as I treated them before, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies.**

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**<sup>12</sup> For I am planting seeds of peace and prosperity among you. The grapevines will be heavy with fruit. The earth will produce its crops, and the heavens will release the dew. Once more I will cause the remnant in Judah and Israel to inherit these blessings. <sup>13</sup> Among the other nations, Judah and Israel became symbols of a cursed nation. But no longer! Now I will rescue you and make you both a symbol and a source of blessing. So don't be afraid. Be strong, and get on with rebuilding the Temple!**

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**<sup>14</sup> "For this is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: I was determined to punish you when your ancestors angered me, and I did not change my mind, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. <sup>15</sup> But now I am determined to bless Jerusalem and the people of Judah. So don't be afraid. <sup>16</sup> But this is what you must do: Tell the truth to each other. Render verdicts in your courts that are just and that lead to peace.**

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**<sup>17</sup> Don't scheme against each other. Stop your love of telling lies that you swear are the truth. I hate all these things, says the Lord." <sup>18</sup> Here is another message that came to me from the Lord of Heaven's Armies. <sup>19</sup> "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: The traditional fasts and times of mourning you have kept in early summer, midsummer, autumn, and winter are now ended. They will become festivals of joy and celebration for the people of Judah. So love truth and peace.**

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**<sup>20</sup> "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: People from nations and cities around the world will travel to Jerusalem. <sup>21</sup> The people of one city will say to the people of another, 'Come with us to Jerusalem to ask the Lord to bless us. Let's worship the Lord of Heaven's Armies. I'm determined to go.' <sup>22</sup> Many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord of Heaven's Armies and to ask for his blessing.**

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**<sup>23</sup> "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: In those days ten men from different nations and languages of the world will clutch at the sleeve of one Jew. And they will say, 'Please let us walk with you, for we have heard that God is with you.' "**

This is what God wants to do through us. His desire for us is to fill us with the love of Jesus so much that our hearts would be one hundred percent focused upward and outward, so he can change Campbell River through us.

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As we follow Jesus and give him permission to change us, we will become continually more loving, and people will stand up and figuratively grab hold of our sleeves and say, ***‘Please let us walk with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’*** ”

That is the goal. That is the purpose for which we exist as a church. That is the purpose for which each of us has been called, to lead each other and others to become committed followers of Jesus Christ who are learning how to love each other.

It’s not about religion. It’s not about rules, or living by the principles of the Bible. It’s about following Jesus, our Saviour, our Lord, and our King. As we submit to his Lordship in our lives we will find ourselves becoming more other focused.

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This is why we have our **Growth Groups**. This will not happen in isolation. We cannot grow alone. We will only grow as we walk with each other and practice these things together by the grace of God and the power of the risen Jesus who lives in us.

If you are not in a Growth Group, I would strongly encourage you to talk with Adrian. He has a table set up in the foyer today and will have it there for the next several weeks.

We have read a lot of Scripture this morning. We aren’t done. Before we close I want to read a whole bunch short verses from the New Testament of how God’s call for us is to focus our hearts outward. I am going to read several examples of what we call, *“The One Anothers.”* Listen to God’s Word. Let it sink into your heart and change you. You will notice that some of them are spoken negatively, such as “Don’t do this.” And others are spoken positively, such as, “Do this.”

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**Mark 9:50 (NLT)**

***50...live in peace with each other.”***

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**John 13:14 (NLT)**

***14 And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet.***

[26]

**John 13:34 (NLT)**

***34 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.***

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**John 13:35 (NLT)**

***35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”***

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**John 15:12 (NLT)**

***12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.***

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**John 15:17 (NLT)**

***17 This is my command: Love each other.***

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**Romans 12:10 (NLT)**

***10 Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.***

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**Romans 12:16 (NLT)**

***16 Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!***

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**Romans 14:13 (NLT)**

***13 So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall.***

**[33]**

**Romans 15:5 (NLT)**

***5 May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus.***

**[34]**

**Romans 15:7 (NLT)**

***7 Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.***

**[35]**

**Romans 15:14 (NLT)**

***14 I am fully convinced, my dear brothers and sisters, that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well you can teach each other all about them.***

**[36]**

**1 Corinthians 12:25 (NLT)**

***25 This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other.***

**[37]**

**2 Corinthians 13:11 (NLT)**

***11 Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.***

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**Galatians 5:13 (NLT)**

***13 For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.***

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**Galatians 5:15 (NLT)**

***15 But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.***

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**Galatians 5:26 (NLT)**

***26 Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.***

**[41]**

**Ephesians 4:2 (NLT)**

***2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.***

**[42]**

**Ephesians 4:32 (NLT)**

***32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.***

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**Ephesians 5:21 (NLT)**

***21 And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.***

**[44]**

**Colossians 3:9 (NLT)**

***9 Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds.***

**[45]**

**Colossians 3:13 (NLT)**

***13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.***

**[46]**

**Colossians 3:16 (NLT)**

***16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives.***

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**1 Thessalonians 3:12 (NLT)**

***12 And may the Lord make your love for one another and for all people grow and overflow, just as our love for you overflows.***

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**1 Thessalonians 4:9 (NLT)**

***9 But we don't need to write to you about the importance of loving each other, for God himself has taught you to love one another.***

**[49]**

**1 Thessalonians 4:18 (NLT)**

***18 So encourage each other with these words.***

**[50]**

**1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NLT)**

***11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.***

**[51]**

**1 Thessalonians 5:15 (NLT)**

***15 See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people.***

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**2 Thessalonians 1:3 (NLT)**

***3 Dear brothers and sisters, we can't help but thank God for you, because your faith is flourishing and your love for one another is growing.***

**[53]**

**Hebrews 10:24 (NLT)**

***24 Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.***

**[54]**

**Hebrews 10:25 (NLT)**

***25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.***

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**James 4:11 (NLT)**

***11 Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you.***

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**James 5:9 (NLT)**

***9 Don't grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door!***

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**James 5:16 (NLT)**

***16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.***

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**1 Peter 1:22 (NLT)**

***22 You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.***

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**1 Peter 4:8 (NLT)**

***8 Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.***

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**1 Peter 4:10 (NLT)**

***10 God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.***

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**1 John 3:11 (NLT)**

***11 This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another.***

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**1 John 3:23 (NLT)**

***23 And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us.***

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**1 John 4:7 (NLT)**

***7 Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.***

**[64]**

**1 John 4:11 (NLT)**

***11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.***

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**1 John 4:12 (NLT)**

***12 No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.***

**[66]**

**2 John 5 (NLT)**

***5 I am writing to remind you, dear friends, that we should love one another. This is not a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning.***

This has been God's desire for his people right from the very beginning of time. We have a propensity to forget. We get distracted by so many things. Sometimes our hearts are hard. We close our ears to what he says. Sometimes we have shallow ideas of God's plan for us and think that he is just calling us to live by rules and principles without having Jesus work a change in our hearts. Or we forget why he wants to change us, so that others would see Jesus in us and join us on our journey towards the heart of God.

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Ever since the beginning, God has been building a people for himself who will wholeheartedly get in the game, focus their hearts upward and outward so he can use us to bring the powerful message of Jesus to the world. He wants to transform Campbell River through us. Before that can happen we need to allow him to transform *us*.

That is what God is doing in Campbell River Baptist Church as we walk with Jesus.

Next week we are going to be starting a new series called, *Becoming Together*, based on Acts 2:42-47. This is the beginning of the New Testament church and how God used them to turn the world upside down. In preparation for that, read Acts 1-2 several times this week and ask him to inspire you to join him in his mission to redeem the world through the church. Life will get abundantly exciting as we do that.



**Parable of the Soils VI**  
**Growing Healthy Hearts**  
**Matthew 13:1-23; Zechariah 7-8**  
**Week of February 12, 2017**

**Objective of this study:** To allow the Holy Spirit revive our hearts.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

**Worship (5 – 10 minutes)**

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Zechariah 8:20-23** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you.

**Welcome**

What life illustrations can you think of from our very large dump of snow in the last couple weeks, that relate to this sermon series?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

**Word (30-45 minutes)**

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read Zechariah 7-8. Stop each time you see an illustration of one of the soil types (Hard, Shallow, Weeds, Fertile) and talk about how it relates to what we've been learning in this sermon series.
  1. What is God's vision for his people?

**Work (30-45 minutes)**

(Be careful not apply this next part to someone else)

**Sermon Quote:** "This has been God's desire for his people right from the very beginning of time. We have a propensity to forget. We get distracted by so many things. Sometimes our hearts are hard. Sometimes we have shallow ideas of God's plan for us and think that he is just calling us to live by rules and principles without having Jesus work a change in our hearts. Ever since the beginning, God has been building a people for himself who will wholeheartedly get in the game, focus their hearts upward and outward so he can use them to bring the powerful message of Jesus to the world. He wants to transform Campbell River through us. Before that can happen we need to allow him to transform *us*."

1. Take 5-10 minutes alone and quietly read through the *One Another's* from the sermon, highlighting the ones that jump out at you. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?
2. Regroup and **share with each other**. Then spend the remaining time **praying for one another**.