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*This box has two purposes:*

*1. It shows approximately how much time should be dedicated to each activity to ensure that the session will run for an hour or for an hour and a half.*

*The times should be considered flexible, depending on the group. But remember, 90 minutes is plenty for this type of study. Even when we think, "Everyone is enjoying the discussion; we can go longer," there is usually at least one (if not several) that are ready to move on. People also have other commitments. Try to stick to one hour and remember that everyone may not feel the same as you about any given topic.*

*2. It provides a place for you to jot some notes during your prep time. Make the study yours. Don't read through it mechanically.*

### **Preparing the Soil of the Mind**

**7-12 minutes (1)**



### **Planting the Seeds of Learning**

**8-12 minutes (2)**



## **Gaining Ground with Good Soil**

### **Leader's Guide for Group Discussion**

The group study/discussion guide and this leader's guide are structured assuming the following:

1. Before the first session, no work will be done by the participants. Either you, the Leader, will bring the books to pass out to everyone or they will have purchased them, but session one is the beginning of the study.

2. Participants are committing to reading a chapter or two during the week and coming to participate in the group discussions.

3. You will pray regularly for the participants, and prayerfully prepare for each session.

4. You will seek to provide an environment where people will sense they can say what is on their mind and venture ideas/answers into the mix without fear of ridicule.

5. You will lead the group in applying the evangelism and discipleship principles you learn during this study in your own life.

6. If you have any questions, you will feel free to contact us at [www.goodsoil.com/gainingground](http://www.goodsoil.com/gainingground)

7. In each session you will have opportunity to review and/or develop ideas from the book, but you will also study the Bible. The Bible study is an important part of the session. Give time to it.

8. Leader's Guide Resources (pdf available for printing handouts) and "Power Point Resources" are available at [www.goodsoil.com/gainingground](http://www.goodsoil.com/gainingground)

#### **Session One**

1. Pass out the books and have the group read the Preface (page 1) silently. Have them first write their answers to the questions following the reading of the Preface (especially if the group is not familiar with each other), then share their answers as an ice-breaker activity. (These questions are from the Individual Study Guide, also available at [www.goodsoil.com/gainingground](http://www.goodsoil.com/gainingground))

**Have you ever been to Europe? Another country? Where?**

**Do you speak another language?**

**How do you feel about reading foreign words in a book?**

2. Have the group look over the Table of Contents (page ix) silently and write down a response to the questions listed under point 2 in the study guide:

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When the majority appears to be done, ask for some to read their responses. Don't force participation.

**What observations can you make about this book and its assumptions from the Table of Contents?** (A few possible observations are listed below.)

- We need to understand the gospel before we can help unbelievers understand it.
- The book's approach to evangelism and discipleship has a definite relationship to a farming model.
- It looks like the approach is based on the Parable of the Soils.
- All the Chapter titles are questions.
- The structure seems to indicate that we will learn the answer to each chapter question as we read that chapter.

**What questions does the Table of Contents raise in your mind?**

(Possible questions:)

- What is "Engel's Scale?"
- What "passages?"
- What does "worldview" mean? What is a worldview onion?

Tell the participants that your hope is to find the answers to their questions together during the next several weeks. Ask:

**What do you hope to learn from this book and our study time together?**

Again, encourage participation by asking them to think about the question and write their answer, *then* ask for responses to be read. This enables people that would normally not speak up, to respond and helps to avoid situations in which the same people—"the first-answersons"—are the only ones who respond.

Be sure to record the responses on a flip chart or white board so you can refer back to them later. It is always encouraging to know questions have been answered and doubts have been dealt with.

3. Read the introduction (pages 3-5) out loud. This can be done with people taking turns reading a paragraph or two or setting it up as a script reading. (Assign readers for Greg, Diana, Bernard, Miriam, and a Narrator. A "readers' theater" script is available in the Leader's Guide Resources at [www.GoodSoil.com](http://www.GoodSoil.com)) Be sensitive to people who may not want to read aloud in public. Assure the group that this is the only time they will be reading together and no one will ever have to read aloud that does not wish to. Then encourage responses from the first two questions:

**7 minutes (3)**



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**Can you relate to Greg and Diana? Can you share a little about frustration you have experienced in evangelism and discipleship?**

Then have people read the “Just suppose...” scenario to themselves and write their responses. When the majority is finished, ask to hear some of the responses.

**Just suppose...Since the time you were saved, several people have professed faith in Christ as a result of your witnessing experiences. That’s great! However, the majority of these people have not demonstrated the kind of spiritual fruit that would clearly indicate their professions were genuine. That’s sad!**

**You are deeply concerned about these disappointing results. Thinking back over these experiences ask yourself, “Why are those people not now demonstrating the kind of life that clearly identifies them as followers of Jesus Christ?”**

**If you had to point to one possible/probable major factor, what would it be?**

Ask the group to share their responses. *After* you have heard from several, ask the participants to look at their responses and determine if their answer is more a problem related to evangelism or discipleship.

Explain that the majority usually think it is a discipleship issue, but that it very well could be a problem with evangelism. During our study we will look at both and seek to better our evangelism *and* discipleship.

***Picking the Harvest for Living***  
***20-25 minutes (4-6)***



4. Explain that the parable Bernard has been studying and that the group will look at is The Parable of the Sower found in Matthew 13:1-10, Mark 4:1-12, and Luke 8:1-10. If there are enough people in the class, assign a different passage to each group. (If not, have the class study just one of the passages.) Have the group read and study their passage with this in mind: They will have to “report” on their passage by sharing a short (2-3 minutes) skit that has as its **goal to communicate what the group believes to be the main point of the parable**. The skit should be some kind of “TV News Report” on Jesus’ telling of the parable.
5. Take prayer requests and lead the group in prayer, asking God to use this study and the group to improve the group’s evangelism and discipleship efforts over the next several weeks.
6. Assign the reading of Chapters 1 and 2 (pages 9-27) for next week, encouraging the group to do the exercises.

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## Preparing the Soil of the Mind

10 minutes (1)



## Planting the Seeds of Learning

12-20 minutes (2-3)



8-10 minutes (4)

## Picking the Harvest for Living

15-20 minutes (5-6)



10-15 minutes

5-10 minutes

## Session Two

1. Break into pairs. Have people share with their partner something no one else in the room would know. Then have partners “introduce” each other to the rest of the group using the new information they have learned.

2. Ask the questions from the study guide:

**Why were Greg and Diana going to leave Germany?**

**Why would that be difficult?**

3. Ask for input on the question:

**What did you think of the group’s reasons about why people who “made decisions” were not becoming part of the church or living lives identifying them as followers of Christ?**

Ask if anyone came up with other possible reasons. Then ask, “Have you seen some of these in your own experience? Which ones?”

4. Either all together or in groups of 4-7, read Jesus’ explanation of the parable (Mt 13:23, Mk 4:13-20, Lk 8:11-15), then do a comparison. Participants should look for what is the same or similar in each passage and what is different in each passage. Have them record their findings on a flip chart or white board. When the groups report, have them give one observation at a time to allow for all to participate.

5. Ask for participants’ responses to the fourth question in the Study Guide (short definitions in their own words for “understand,” “embrace,” and “retain.”) The definitions will be varied, but should look something like this:

Understand: The good soil hearer ‘gets it.’

Embrace: The good soil hearer ‘makes it his own.’

Retain: The good soil hearer ‘keeps it with him,’ ‘won’t let go of it.’

6. Ask for observations about the Scale. Ask: **What are important principles we can learn from the Scale?** and **How can these principles help us in our evangelism and discipleship?**

7. Assign the reading of Chapter 3 (pages 29-42) for the next session. Break up into twosomes. Have people share with their partners the name of someone they want to reach for Christ. Have the pairs pray for each other and the application of the principles from the Scale.

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## ***Preparing the Soil of the Mind***

***10-15 minutes (1)***



## ***Planting the Seeds of Learning***

***12-20 minutes (2-3)***



***8-10 minutes (4)***

### Session Three

1. Do a presentation of the Midrash (an invented story rabbis used to illustrate true Bible stories) “Preparing the Soil” from the Leader’s Guide Resources (page 3). Read it and practice it so you can tell the story with emotion without reading it.

After presenting it, explain that the story is simply a Midrash. Then ask:

**What did you like about that story?**

**Was there anything you disliked?**

**What do you think about Susanna’s conclusion?** (*One of the possible lessons Jesus had in telling the Parable of the Soils was to teach that people’s hearts need to be prepared.*)

2. Ask people to share the basic gospel concepts they wrote out for the exercise on page 35 of ***Gaining Ground***. Then ask:

**Did you have more or less than the Good Soil Team?**

Find Diana and Miriam’s walk-thru of the eight gospel concepts (page 36) and have someone read it to the group.

Ask: **Does it make sense to you?**

3. Cut out the 8 Basic Gospel Concept cards in the Leader’s Guide Resources (page 5) ahead of time and pass them out one to a person during the group study time (if you have less than eight people in your group give some people two cards). Then, starting with God and moving through them in the order given in the book (God, Man, Sin, Death, Christ, Cross, Faith, Life) ask people to tell a short story from the Bible that fits their concept, starting at the beginning of the Bible. Keep each contribution no longer than a minute.                    or

Ask if anyone can share the eight essential elements of the gospel that the Good Soil quartet came up with in Chapter 3. Pass out the prepared cards (see above) and have the people with the cards “put themselves in order” according to the chronology of their revelation by God (God, Man, Sin, Death, Christ, Christ, Faith, Life). After they are in order, lead the group through a “telling of the story.” Either have the person holding the “God” card tell a sentence story about God (e.g. all-powerful, holy God created the heavens and the earth) or have everyone help tell the story. Then move on to man. (Man was uniquely created (Gen.

*If you have a flipchart and easel, list the stages as they are on this page. If a flip chart is not available, why not use a whiteboard or a big piece of cardboard. The objective is to get the concepts up before the people and keep them there as they work through this exercise.*

*As ideas are given, list them under or beside each stage.*

*Look for ways members of the group can practice evangelism and discipleship in each of these stages.*

### ***Picking the Harvest for Living*** ***20-25 minutes (4-5)***



2:7) in the image of God as a responsible being with choice, but he chose to disobey God.) Continue on through the eight essential gospel elements. When you are done, you will have given a chronological gospel presentation. See if the group can come up with a verse for each of the elements. (e.g. **God**: Gen 1:1, Heb. 11:6; **Man**: Gen. 2:7; **Sin**: Rom.3:23; **Death**: Heb. 9:27; **Christ**: John 14:6; **Cross**: I Peter 2:24; **Faith**: Eph. 2:8-9; **Life**: John 11:25-26)

One way to do the story is circle storytelling. Have a person start the story with one sentence. Move around the circle with each person adding a sentence to the story. Move them on to the next gospel element as you see fit with something like: "Let's move on to a part of God's story that tells about 'man'."

Talk about it as a group.

**Did the story make sense?**

**Could this be a way to share the gospel with your friends?**

**(Chronological Bible Telling)**

4. Have the group look at the bottom half of the Scale on page 42 of ***Gaining Ground*** and come up with practical things (actions) we can do in each of the evangelism stages (Tilling, Planting, Reaping) and even for each section of those stages.

Tilling Evangelism

1 – Model, love, pray

2 – Challenge worldview

Planting Evangelism

3 – Teach gospel concepts

4 – Establish uniqueness of Jesus

Reaping Evangelism

5 – Clarify

6 – Personalize

7 – Persuade



Ask: How are these actions we listed truly evangelism and not what some people call *pre*-evangelism. (If what we are doing is truly moving our friends “up the scale” toward a faith response, we are involved in evangelism.)

5. Assign the reading of Chapter Four (pages 43-55) for the next session. Have everyone pick one or two ways (from the list you all created) they will be involved in evangelism and discipleship ***this week***. Pray in threesomes after sharing with your partners what you want to do this week to move someone up the scale.

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## Session Four

### ***Preparing the Soil of the Mind***

***10-15 minutes (1)***



### ***Planting the Seeds of Learning***

***15-20 minutes (2-3)***



1. Have enough pens and 3 x 5 cards on the tables before the class comes in for everyone to have one. As they come in, ask the class members to write their answer to the following question on a card. **“Would you rather sell mechanical pencils on a busy street corner for two hours or ask a friend or two each day for a week to help out your son/daughter by considering purchasing mechanical one pencil from you.” Why?**

After all the students have written their answer, ask for responses and discuss them. Ask:

**Which method do you think would bring you more results?**

2. Display the charts found on pages 50-51 of ***Gaining Ground*** (Slide 1 in “Leader’s Guide Power Point Resources”) to the group. Ask:

**When is Initial Contact Evangelism most appropriate?**

**What are some dangers associated with this approach?**

**What are some advantages of relational evangelism?**

**What are some dangers associated with this approach?**

Try to get people thinking about these questions and sharing their ideas. List them on a flipchart or some kind of poster for all to see. If you need to prime the pump a little, use some of the answers the Good Soil quartet came up with on page 60.

Ask, **Which style of evangelism is better?**

Of course, the answer should be, “It depends on the situation.” While it is true that in a postmodern culture relationships will open doors for us and time is needed not only for us to share God’s story but for people to process it, there are times when Initial Contact Evangelism is more appropriate.

3. Explain that when we see “preaching” in the Bible we assume that it is Initial Contact Evangelism but that is not always the case. Have small groups read Acts 10 or 13:13-52, looking for evidences of Relational Evangelism. After they have read and recorded their findings (on flip charts or whiteboards, if possible) have them report to the group.

(Possible answers are on the next page.)

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## Acts 10

### Relational

v 23 Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests

v 23-24 Peter, some of his friends (brothers) and the new friends travelled together for more than a day, probably talking as they went.

v 24 Cornelius had the house full of friends and family

v 48 Peter stayed with them for a few days

### Act 13:13-52

v 14 Paul and Barnabas entered the synagogue and sat down—they went to where the people were to interact with them. They were not on the “preaching schedule.”

v 15 They were asked to share.

v 41-42 No appeal for a response is recorded. Paul finished preaching and the next verse says, “So when the Jews went out...”

v 42 Paul and Barnabas were invited back to share more.

v 43 Many of the attendees followed Paul and Barnabas, who “speaking to them, persuaded them...”

v 44 Apparently these people invited their friends—on the next Sabbath “almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.”

### ***Picking the Harvest for Living***

***20-25 minutes (4-5)***



4. In twos, have participants share how they will prepare the soil in the heart of someone they know this week.

5. Assign the reading of Chapter 5 (pages 57-71) for the next session.

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***Preparing the Soil of the Mind***

***15- 20 minutes (1)***



***Planting the Seeds of Learning***

***15-20 minutes (2-3)***



1. Show the small charts found on pages 68-69 of ***Gaining Ground*** (Display the charts with slides 2 and 3 from “Leader’s Guide Power Point Resources” online at [www.goodsoil.com/GainingGround](http://www.goodsoil.com/GainingGround)). Ask:

**Can you explain these charts?**

Have different people explain each chart, giving opportunity for participation by all. (See the Individual Study Guide for an explanation of them, as well as Bern’s explanation on pages 68-69.

Many people need to be exposed to the gospel and hear it—in part or in whole—several times before they are ready to make a faith response. Tell the Amy Carmichael story (page 6 in the “Leader’s Guide Resources”).

2. Have someone read Acts 16:11-21. Ask:

**What evidence can you find that, even though it appears that Lydia heard the gospel once and trusted Christ, she may have heard many times?** (v. 16 says, “Once when we were going to the place of prayer...” Apparently Paul went there several times—maybe several times before Lydia trusted Christ. She also invited them to her house, which probably did not happen the first time she met them. Also, verse 17 says, “She kept this up for many days...” which is more evidence that Paul made several trips to that river.)

**Is there evidence that her conversion was a process?** (Verse 13 tells how Paul went to the river where he expected to find a place of prayer. Lydia was there which shows that she was a God-seeker. She had already “converted” to Judaism or at least was interested in monotheism, having grown up in a polytheistic culture.)

Read Acts 16:22-40. It appears that the jailer trusted Christ after hearing only once, but notice in verse 32 that “they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.” We don’t know how long they shared there. It most probably was not the 10 seconds it takes to say, “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” **But why do you think his conversion was ‘overnight’? What was going in his life that could have made a difference?** (He was in a crisis in his life—he thought the

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### ***Picking the Harvest for Living***

***20-25 minutes (4-5)***



prisoners were gone and he would be tortured and killed—he was going to commit suicide. **Crisis cracks the core.**)

3. Ask group members to think of family members or friends who need Christ. Have them think about where they would place their friends on the matrix. Are they open to the gospel or closed? Do they know a lot about the gospel or a little? (slide 3 on the “Leader’s Guide Resources 2 powerpoint).

4. In response to the question, “How can we move people across the scale,” Miriam answered, “Love, integrity, and time.” (page 62) Ask: **What do you think that means? What practical steps can we take this week to move our friends and family members across the matrix so they will be more open to the gospel?**

5. Form dyads and, using the “Our Best Ideas” chart on page 71, take turns reading one of the ideas and explaining in your own words what that means; flesh out the principle learned that is summarized in each statement.

6. Assign the reading of Chapter 6 (pages 75-86) for next week.

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Session 6

***Preparing the Soil of the Mind***

***15- 20 minutes (1)***



1. Divide the participants into two groups and have the groups form one line each moving away from the whiteboard. The person in the front of each line should have a dry erase marker and space on the whiteboard to draw. You will whisper a word in the ear of the person at the end of each line (star, sailboat, Christmas tree). Using his finger and having only one attempt, that person will draw a picture representing that word *on the back* of the person in front of him. The next person draws what she felt on the back of the person in front of her, and this continues until the person in the front then transfers the drawing to the whiteboard. People in opposite lines should not look at the other line while the drawing is taking place and the ones who draw on the whiteboard should be drawing at the same time. Do this with several words depending on the time available. Then talk about the exercise. Ask:

**What was difficult about that exercise? Why?** Answers will vary, but the idea is this: the exercise is difficult because it is a form of communication with which we are not familiar. Explore this concept with the entire class and make the point that when we are not familiar with worldviews and evangelism, it is difficult at first also, but with practice, it can get better.

Sometimes people bring out the point that we make assumptions as soon as the person starts drawing. When we do that and have a pre-conceived idea in our minds of what we think the picture will be, it will throw us off every time. This ties in well with what Bernard says in the first paragraph of Chapter 5 of ***Gaining Ground*** (bottom of page 57): “the hearer *rejects* the gospel because he doesn’t fully understand or something in his worldview predisposes him to do so.” Use this as a segue into the following discussion.

2. On page 82 there is a pull-quote that says, “Unbiblical elements exist in a person’s worldview that may confuse his understanding of words I use to communicate a message.” Ask: **Can you think of some concrete examples of this?** (Slide 4 in Power Point Resources) Have the class try to come up with several examples in small groups.

3. Using the power point provided in the Leader’s Guide Resources (slide 5), step the class through (or have one of the students who read the chapter and thinks he/she has a grasp on this do it) the Worldview Noise diagram. Then ask: **What specific**

***Planting the Seeds of Learning***

***10-15 minutes (2-3)***



15-30 minutes (4)

**negative results will likely occur if we do not understand and effectively cut through worldview noise?** Have the small groups try to come up with several and then have them share, each group sharing one until the results are exhausted. (Some possible answers—given by the group—are listed on page 91 of the book. Only share them if the students are having trouble thinking of examples.)

4. Have the group open their Bibles to three examples of worldview noise in the Bible (Jerusalem Acts 2:5, 10, 14, 22-41; Lystra 14:6-18; Athens 17:16-34). Have each group look up and read a different passage and respond to the questions below. The questions can be displayed for all to see on a flip chart, white board.

- **Knowing what you know about the audience and what you read here, where do you think they were on the Good Soil E & D Scale when speaker began preaching?**
- **Of the 8 gospel concepts (God, man, sin, death, Christ, cross, faith, life) which did the group understand fairly well?**
- **With which of these gospel concepts did the preacher begin? Why?**

➤ **Did the group have faulty worldview concepts? What did the speaker do/say to challenge and correct faulty worldview concepts?**

After hearing from each group, ask: **In what ways were the Jews in Acts 2 an exception to the way most people groups initially appear in relation to the E & D Scale?** (They had received the written Word of God, they were chosen and had heard God’s message for many years.) Say: **You will read about Greg and Diana and Bern and Miriam’s study of these same passages this week. Hopefully, it will reinforce what we have learned together today.**

5. In 1 Corinthians 1:23, Paul says, “we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a *stumbling block...*” Because they had God’s Word for years, they understood (for the most part) who God is, who man is and how sin separated man from God, and brings death. But the idea that the Messiah (the Christ) was going to be a servant and come die a criminal’s death was a stumbling block for them. Paul goes on to say, “we preach Christ crucified...to the Greeks *foolishness...*” As we saw in the Acts 17 passage, the Greeks had a hard time with the resurrection—they mocked him and called him a babler—it appeared as foolishness to them.

Talk as a group about people you know that are in one of those two categories. Pray for family and friends and for each other that you will be able to help them get past these barriers and trust Christ.

6. Assign the reading of Chapter 7 (pages 87-99) for next week and ask the group to be sure to bring their books to class next session.

### *Picking the Harvest for Living*

10-15 minutes (5-6)



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Session 7

***Preparing the Soil of the Mind***

***20-30 minutes (1)***



1. Put up slide 6 from the Leader's Guide Power Point Resources (or read the quote from page 97) and say: **Think of an example of this from your evangelism efforts. Would anyone like to share?**

Answers will definitely vary. If you are in a group larger than 7, ask people to answer the question in small groups (4-7) first; then see if anyone would like to share with the larger group. Hopefully by now, several will be able to share examples of how they have encountered different worldviews and how that affected the way they began (or should begin) to share the gospel. Dr. Frank Luntz in his book *Words that Work*, wrote, "It's not what you say, it's what people hear." That is a great "worldview noise" quote. Ask:

**Did the quartet's study of the Acts passages help you understand this whole issue of worldview noise?**

**On a lighter note, how did you feel when Greg decided to stay in Germany?** Use these three questions to break the ice and get the group on to the subject at hand. Then say: **Today we are going to read a couple of pages together. Open to Chapter 8, page 101. As we read, be watching for evidences (underline them or mark them as we go) that Good Soil principles were changing their ministry.** Take turns reading a couple of paragraphs until you reach the middle of page 103. (An example of highlighting the evidences is included in the Leader's Guide Resources, pages 7 and 8.)

**The Good Soil principles applied to their lives made a difference for Greg and Diana and Bern and Miri in this fictional story. However, Good Soil principles have truly made an impact in situations around the world. Here is just one example:**

On July 27th, 2010 I embarked on a "police training agreement journey" with a group of 36 Costa Rican officers from five different police bases (Guadalupe, Moravia, Coronado, San Pedro and Curridabat). Every Tuesday we would meet for one hour to study *The Story of Hope* (TSOH), followed by three hours of tactical training. The first week, I presented every officer with their own copy of TSOH and their own Bible, based on the agreement that they would study it, do the homework and APPLY what they learned. Also noteworthy was the fact that if they didn't bring their copies of TSOH and their Bibles to every session, we would do an absurd amount of push-ups in order to assist them in the

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remembering process and in the importance of always having their “spiritual weapons & armor” with them.

Week after week and story after story I witnessed the Holy Spirit convicting the hearts of these men and women. God’s Word is powerful and I witnessed this each week as we would use God’s Word to tackle and wrestle through a host of doctrinal lies they had believed their entire life.

The culmination of our course was a three day intense training program, finishing each day with two TSOH stories. When the time came on Friday September 17th, 2010, I challenged each one to make a decision—repent, surrender and follow the King of kings or reject His message and gift of eternal life. Only two options! I told them that waiting any longer to respond was simply a refusal and that each one was without excuse. Not only does creation call out His glory, but each one had studied and completely understood the full Gospel message for ten weeks.

Decision time: One by one officers came forward (in uniform and in front of their peers) to make their stand for Christ! Nine officers out of 36 passed from death to life that afternoon, followed by another commander Saturday morning (9-18-20) and an officer’s wife on Sunday evening (9-19-10). (Look for more stories at [www.goodsoil.com](http://www.goodsoil.com) and click on the “Stories” tab.)

**We need to apply these principles to our lives as well. So let’s dig a little deeper into them and agree to take them with us this week as we go back to work and school.**

### ***Planting the Seeds of Learning***

***20-30 minutes (2)***



2. Pass out copies of slide 7 and one verse (from slide 8) for each person from the Leader’s Guide Power Point Resources and do the exercise as explained below.

- A. Briefly, explain (review) what Good Soil E&D is by reading each of the Good Soil texts and explaining the significance of the three key verbs.
- B. Then, give each person one of the Bible verse slips for the 10 verses on the bottom half of the exercise page.
- C. Instruct each one to find the statement on page 1 that best matches his/her verse.
- D. Then, instruct them to move around the room to find the other 9 best matches from other participants...until they have found all 10.

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### ***Picking the Harvest for Living***

***20-30 minutes (3-4)***



- E. Give a prize to the person from each table who finds all 10 correct matches.
- F. Use PowerPoint slides 9-18 in the teaching presentation to present the correct answers. As you share the correct answers show how this study helps us understand better the meaning of the words understand, embrace, and retain (e.g. In the Acts 15:4 passage, Barnabas and Paul were greatly and warmly embraced. A good soil person embraces the gospel in the same way.)

3. Show slide 19 in the Leader’s Guide Power Point Resource. Lead a discussion around these questions:

- **What can we do this week to “till”** (model, love, pray, and challenge worldview) **with a friend, neighbor or family member?** (Answers will vary.)
- **What can we do this week to “plant”** (teach gospel concepts and establish uniqueness of Jesus) **in the life of a friend, neighbor or family member?** (Answers will vary.)
- **What can we do this week to “reap”** (clarify, personalize, persuade) **a friend, neighbor or family member?** (Answers will vary.)
- **How do I decide where my contacts are on the scale and thus whether I should till, plant, or reap?** (By learning their worldview. Worldviews more distant from a biblical worldview are further down the scale.)

**This week we will read about a tool for learning the worldview of a person. Then we’ll talk about it next at our next session.**

4. Assign the reading of the rest of Chapter 8 (pages 103-114) for next week. Also, ask several individuals to do some research and bring their findings to the class. Here is the assignment: “What do \_\_\_\_\_ believe about God, man, sin, death, Christ, cross, faith, and life?” Worldviews that could be researched depending on their existing (or lack of the same) in your community:

|                |          |             |                   |
|----------------|----------|-------------|-------------------|
| Agnostic       | Buddhist | Hindu       | Jehovah’s Witness |
| Mormon         | Muslim   | Materialist | New Age           |
| Roman Catholic |          |             |                   |

Stories can be found in the “Resources” (pages 9-16). Also available at [www.goodsoil.com/gainingground](http://www.goodsoil.com/gainingground) is a grid called “Religious Worldview Analyses” which can be used for more in-depth research by participants.

## Session 8

### ***Preparing the Soil of the Mind***

***10-15 minutes (1)***



1. Bring some “3-D” glasses (used for viewing 3-D movies) to class or make some of your own with red cellophane on one side and blue on the other. Or make several different viewing slides (which participants can hold up to their eyes) out of different colors of cellophane. Have participants put on the 3-D glasses or hold the cellophane up in front of their eyes. You may even want to have people hold up different types of material in front of their eyes (from translucent to “impossible to see through.” Ask: **What do you see?** Of course, answers will vary, but with the 3-D glasses, besides “seeing everything blue or red” people will probably say that things are “fuzzy” or “unclear.” Use the exercise to show how looking through something—anything—will allow a person to “see the world” from a different perspective. Ask: **Do you remember the definition of ‘worldview’ given on page 106 of *Gaining Ground*?** Show the definition on slide 20 from the Leader’s Guide Power Point Resource. (Worldview: A perspective through which an individual sees and interprets life.) Just as these glasses and other things color or distort what we view with our eyes, so our worldview colors our perspective on life. We need to know what “glasses” a person is wearing to be able to share the gospel more effectively. “Peeling the worldview onion” can help.

Then say: **Knowing the major worldview in a region is not enough. Each individual, while holding to the tenets of what could be a well-known worldview will have *some of her own ideas mixed in*, meaning that *each person has their own distinct worldview*. How can we know 6 billion worldviews?** (By peeling their ‘worldview onion.’)

2. Ask participants to give a report on their research of worldviews. This can be done by simply telling what they learned from the story they read, reading it aloud, or reporting in a more detailed manner from the “Religious Worldview Analyses” grid. Remember, at this point there is no need to have your participants learn about more worldviews than are represented by your community. We don’t want your group to have information overload. Start them out slowly. If, after you finish your study of ***Gaining Ground***, there is interest in learning about worldviews, you may want to continue meeting and dig deeper. For now three or four should be the maximum for an exercise such as this.

3. Using slide 21 in the Power Point Resources, review the onion-peeling principles learned from Chapter 8. Emphasize that to get to the core of someone’s beliefs, we must start with “Entry

### ***Planting the Seeds of Learning***

***40-60 minutes (2-5)***





Conversations,” move to “Investigative Questions,” and finally move into “Conversion Discussions” when someone has opened up and is showing interest.

4. After everyone has an idea of what to look for in major worldviews in your community and understands the onion-peeling principles, tell the group you are going to practice ‘peeling onions.’ Pass out the Worldview Persona cards (pages 17-25 in Resources), asking everyone to read their card, keeping it a secret from everyone. Then, tell everyone to find a partner whose name on their card does **not** start with the same letter as their partner’s. Each person will talk with their partner, trying to determine the worldview of the other person.

5. If you have more than seven people, have one or more groups (4-7 people) open their Bibles to Colossians 4:2-6 while other group(s) open to Ephesians 6:18-20. Ask the groups to **develop and discuss a list of evangelism-related observations from the texts.**

Some possible observations that could be shared from the passages:

#### Colossians 4:2-6

- We ought to pray for opportunities to share/for wisdom in doing so.
- The gospel needs to be proclaimed ‘clearly.’
- Wisdom is needed in the way we act toward unbelievers.
  - Peeling-the-onion type wisdom
  - Peeling the onion provides wisdom for further encounters
- Conversation seasoned “so that you may know how to answer”
  - Careful peeling helps us know how to answer

#### Ephesians 6:18-20

- As we open our mouths we need the right words. How will we know?
  - Prayer
  - Peeling the onion
- Need to share fearlessly **as I should.**
  - Asking questions, being relational is natural and opens doors.
  - Being natural takes away the fear factor.
  - Practicing—doing more and more of it—takes away fear.
  - Praying one for another takes away the fear factor.

### ***Picking the Harvest for Living***

**10-15 minutes (6)**



6. Encourage everyone to continue to practice ‘peeling onions’ on each other, but also to begin peeling the worldview onion of neighbors, friends, and workmates. Ask for prayer requests related to contacts that need the Lord and their possible worldviews. Pray in small groups or together.

Assign the reading of Chapter 9 (pages 115-123) in ***Gaining Ground.***

Session 9

**Preparing the Soil of the Mind**

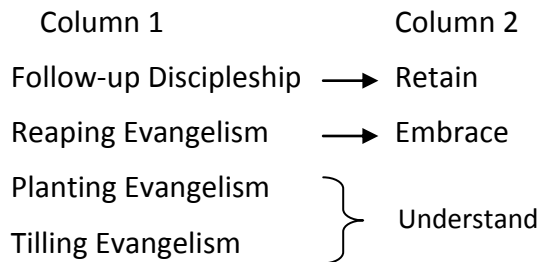
**20-25 minutes (1)**



1. Tell the class they have just come into Creative Writing 101. Here is their assignment: In groups of 4 to 7 they must first determine the relationship between the words in column 1 and column 2.

| Column 1               | Column 2   |
|------------------------|------------|
| Planting Evangelism    | Understand |
| Tilling Evangelism     | Embrace    |
| Reaping Evangelism     | Retain     |
| Follow-up Discipleship |            |

Then they must write a poem that conveys not only that information, but also anything else they have learned to date from the book and the sessions that is relevant to a discussion of the above. (See below for the relationship between the columns as we have outlined in previous sessions—working from the bottom upward.)



*We start where our friends are and seek to move them to Christ by tilling and planting until they understand the gospel and embrace it by trusting Christ. Then we disciple, helping them retain the gospel as an important, integral part of their lives.*

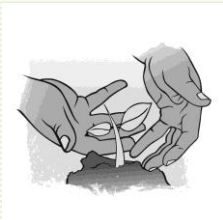
(We engage in tilling evangelism—preparing the soil through modeling, loving, praying and challenging worldview...and in planting evangelism—teaching gospel concepts and establishing the uniqueness of Jesus—to **help our friends understand the gospel.**)

We engage in reaping evangelism—clarifying, personalizing, and persuading—to **help our friends embrace the gospel.**

We disciple our newly saved friends **to help them retain the gospel.**)

**Planting the Seeds of Learning**

**30-45 minutes (2-4)**



2. Use slide 22 in the Power Point Resources to review the “Gospel Knowledge Deficiencies” learned in reading Chapter 9. Make sure people understand that when an unbeliever is -8 to -12 on the Good Soil Scale, he/she knows nothing of the gospel. We cannot start with Jesus, but must till or prepare the ground. Where someone is on the scale will determine where we can begin to share the gospel.

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3. Distribute the Isaiah 28 exercise found on page 26 of the Resources. Ask participants to follow the instructions (highlighting with different colored markers the a. different actions of the farmer b. different places for planting c. different kinds of tools/implements). Explain that just as a farmer uses different tools, plants in different places and ways, God intends to judge His people in different ways to produce what He desires in their hearts. The context of this Isaiah passage is God's judgment on Samaria (Israel). However, the passage symbolism of agriculture fits well with the parable of the soils. In fact, Jesus' language in Mark 4:3 & 9 fits very well with the language of 28:23. (In fact, it makes one wonder if He had this passage in mind while teaching the Parable of the Soils.)

4. Distribute the verses below one to a group. Ask each group to read their verse(s) and determine what lesson they can draw from their passage that will apply to evangelism (keeping in mind the tilling, planting, and reaping principles). (Possible responses are given with the verses below.)

**Proverbs 20:4** Just like the farmer, if we don't plow (prepare the soil of the heart) we shouldn't expect to reap.

**John 4:35-38** Jesus told the disciples that they were going to reap where others had already labored (Jesus, the woman, prophets?) We should be encouraged that sometimes all we will be able to do is till, or plant a seed, but that God may bring someone else along.

**1 Cor. 3:6** Similar principle to above: God will use us in different ways to evangelize, but it is He who brings fruit. (Compare to Isaiah 55:10-11)

5. Ask participants to think silently about friends and family that need Christ and answer these questions on a 3 x 5 card:

- What gospel knowledge deficiencies do they have?
- What should I be doing (tilling, planting, and reaping)?
- Who—in this room or outside it—could help me with these tasks?
- How can the others pray for me (and my friend)?

Pray together, then assign the reading of Chapter 10 (pages 125-138) in *Gaining Ground*. Say, **“Be sure to do the exercise on page 128 before reading on.”**

Also, give a copy of the Emmaus skit (pages 27-28 in the Resources) to three people and ask them to prepare the skit for the next session.

### ***Picking the Harvest for Living***

***10-20 minutes (5)***



Session 10

**Preparing the Soil of the Mind**

**10-15 minutes (1)**



1. Begin with “The context game.” Make a competition out of it between small groups. Lead the game as follows: Ask: **Who Am I? What animal is represented by the noun left out of the sentence? Provide a logical replacement for the missing noun.**

The \_\_\_\_\_ ran after the cat. (dog)

The \_\_\_\_\_ trumpeted in fear when he saw the mouse.  
(elephant)

\_\_\_\_\_ roar to establish their rule in the jungle. (lions)

Rob and Sherry laughed when they saw the \_\_\_\_\_ swinging from tree to tree. (monkeys)

Say: **Give me a definition of this word: blue.** (Participants may say that it is a color, they may say something else. Then ask what blue means in the following sentences. (This could be a tie-breaker.)

1. I feel blue today.
2. The car is blue.

After the game, say: **These were simple illustrations of how context is so important in helping get the correct understanding. In small groups discuss what Bernard meant when he asked the question on page 125.** (Show the question on slide 23. “How much Bible content and biblical context does each unbeliever need to make a ‘good soil’ faith response?”)

2. Have the three participants you asked present the Emmaus skit.

Ask: **How did the two disciples feel before they met Jesus?**

**How do you think Jesus felt when they didn’t understand?**

**How did the disciples feel when they realized it was Jesus?**

**What stories/prophecies did you include on page 128 in the book that the people at the seminar didn’t?** (Receive answers from people, one answer at a time so many can participate.)

Then say: **The context of the Old Testament helped the disciples understand why Jesus had to die and how the whole story is good news.**

3. Use Power Point slide 24 to share D.A. Carson’s quote from **The Gaggling of God** (which is quoted by Joe Shepherd on page 130 of **Gaining Ground**) to communicate the importance of telling God’s story in evangelism and discipleship. Then use slides 25-27 as you illustrate what Joe did in explaining systematic and biblical theologies.

**Planting the Seeds of Learning**

**40-50 minutes (2-4)**



*(You will want to walk through the Power Point slides before the session so you can see how they develop. Start slide 25 and say something like what is written on the next page which is an adaptation of Joe’s presentation on pages 130-134. Make the presentation your own and be sure to get participation from the others.)*

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**“Modern man was scientific. (Click once.) If he could measure it, label it, or prove something scientifically, then it was true. Defining things and putting everything in its place—like in these boxes—made him feel important. (Boxes will appear one by one in neat rows. When they are in place, click again.)**

**“Christianity’s response to modern man was systematic theology and clear-cut evangelistic presentations. (Theology appears and the boxes are filled with the ‘-ologies’.) Besides that, modern man, for the most part, knew the Bible generally and considered it to be true. But that is not the case anymore. Postmodern man says, ‘There is no absolute truth, so how can anything be proven?’ ‘What works for me is good, what works for you is good. But don’t try to convince me to change, because my way—whatever that way is—is just as good as yours.’**

**“Biblical theology approaches the Bible from a different perspective than systematic theology. Instead of dealing with a single topic using various passages to do so, biblical theology seeks to understand the redemptive story of God as it is revealed progressively, starting in the Old Testament and continuing through the New. Each text is dealt with in its historical context, building on the foundation of what came before.**

**“There is nothing wrong with systematic theology. Both systematic and biblical are good, but biblical theology is a more effective approach for post moderns.**

**“What or about whom do we learn when we open the Bible? ‘In the beginning...’ (God. Click to reveal the ‘God’ arrow. ) That’s right. We learned about God. And then throughout the Bible, we learn more and more about God. That’s what the expanding arrow represents—more and more knowledge.” (Continue with *your* understanding of Joe’s God, man, sin, death, Christ, cross, faith, life presentation.) Ask for participation to ensure understanding.**

4. Distribute *The Story of Hope*, and a copy of slide 28 from the Power Point Resources. Based on what they have learned from the study to date, ask participants to evaluate *The Story of Hope*, listing five positive distinctives.

5. Pray together, then assign the reading of Chapter 11 (pages 141-152) in ***Gaining Ground*** along with the assignment of reading pages 4 through 10 of *The Story of Hope*. (Advise them that from now on they should bring *The Story of Hope* with them to the session.)

### ***Picking the Harvest for Living***

***10-15 minutes (5)***



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Session 11

**Preparing the Soil of the Mind**

**10 minutes (1)**



**Planting the Seeds of Learning**



**7 minutes (2)**

**40 minutes (3)**

**Telling ( 6 each, 12 total)**

**Preparation (10 minutes)**

1. Tell a brief story in which some technical jargon or facts are naturally explained or learned. Example:  
“Our 9-year-old daughter was writing on her job chart which stuck on the refrigerator with a magnet and...she fainted! We could see the mark she was making go off the chart and down the fridge where she fell! We quickly took her to the doctor to find out what was wrong with her. No one could tell us. After visiting several doctors and having many tests, finally a cardiologist told us that her heart was slowing down so much that it was as if it had stopped—which meant she wasn’t getting enough oxygen to her brain so she fainted. Within a few months the doctors put a pacemaker in our now little 10-year-old girl.”

If someone were to give a lecture on “The Purposes of Pacemaker/Implantable Cardioverter Insertion” it might be interesting to some, but many would fall asleep. Yet I told you a very short story about my daughter Andrea and you learned a thing or two without realizing it. Stories captivate our attention. The Bible is the same way. Its stories can captivate our attention and teach us important truths at the same time. Today we are going to see how *The Story of Hope* (TSOH) can help us with that.

2. Review the reading assignment of pages 4-10 in (TSOH).

3. Say: ***The Story of Hope* can be used in two different ways:**

Chronological Bible *Story Telling* and Chronological *Bible Teaching*—and both are flexible—expandable and shrinkable based on the situation. Choose a partner whom you will work to practice telling and teaching.

**Bible Story Telling (short version):** Tell the entire story by just reading the colored bars or paraphrasing the same. When one reads the colored bars from beginning to end, the story flows and one can get a good idea of God’s redemptive story as found in the Bible. For an interesting comparison, one could *read* the colored bars of stories 1 through 20, then the other could *paraphrase* stories 21-40. After you are finished, discuss which was easier, etc. Reading or paraphrasing stories 1-40 can be done in 8 to 12 minutes. Remember that you could also tell each story individually or two or three together which would naturally take more time but would also give a much clearer understanding to the listener—especially someone low on the Good Soil scale (-8 to -12).

**Bible Teaching:** After you have practiced telling the whole story, each person should take 10 minutes to look at a lesson he will teach to his partner. (Distribute them so all or several of the

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## Teaching (8 each, 16 total)

### *Planting the Seeds of Learning (continued)*

*Chrono Bridge 15 minutes (4)*



### *Picking the Harvest for Living*



stories will be covered.) After the preparation time, give each person 7 or 8 minutes to teach just one of the stories using the questions and discussion prompters given in TSOH. When they are done, get feedback and explain that in a normal 30 to 45 minute session with an unbeliever, you could get through 3 or 4 stories. Remind the participants to be sensitive to their unsaved friend, asking questions along the way to ensure understanding.

4. Ask: **Do you remember the action verbs that Jesus said describe the Good Soil person?** (understand, embrace, retain) Say: **While the Bible Story Telling or Teaching in *The Story of Hope* helps people to “get it,” to truly *understand* God’s story of redemption, The Chrono Bridge to Life in the back of the book helps people to *embrace* the gospel. Notice how the Chrono Bride helps to *clarify, personalize, and persuade*—the three tasks of the evangelist in the reaping stage of evangelism.** (The conference-goers pointed out ways that the Chrono Bridge helps one to clarify, personalize, and persuade on pages 145-149. Use those pages and your own understanding of the Bridge to develop ideas here.)

The Chrono Bridge pages have much information. Have participants turn to page 150 in ***Gaining Ground*** to emphasize the importance of being creative in sharing the key theological concepts developed on those pages.

5. Take prayer requests and pray for one another, particularly for opportunities to begin using *The Story of Hope* with key contacts<sup>1</sup>.

Remind participants to read the final chapter and the Epilogue (pages 155-166) for the next session.

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<sup>1</sup> As people develop relationships through onion peeling, one natural transition to spiritual things is asking what people think about the Bible or if they have read the Bible. Many times people say, “The Bible is a big book,” or “It’s just a bunch of stories that don’t tie together,” or “I just can’t make sense of it.” That opens up a great opportunity to say something like, “I know what you mean. But I’ve found a tool that shrinks it down,” or “shows how the stories all tell one big story,” or “that tie it all together and helps me understand it. Could I share it with you sometime?” That gives me a chance to schedule a future meeting in which we can begin to study *The Story of Hope* or to begin telling His story. Another question I have used quite successfully is, “If your children asked you, ‘What happens to people when they die?’ what would you tell them?” Similarly, I can say that I have found a tool that deals with that and other important questions and ask if I can share it with them. Encourage your participants to use these questions and maybe your group will come up with others. I’d love to hear them. Share them with me at [www.goodsoil.com/gainingground](http://www.goodsoil.com/gainingground).

Lesson 12

**Preparing the Soil of the Mind**

**10 - 15 minutes (1)**



**Planting the Seeds of Learning (2-4)**

**50 - 60 minutes**



**Preparation (10 minutes)**

**Teaching (10 minutes each)**

1. After the greetings are over (and opening in prayer), ask everyone to write down the answers to these questions on a 3 x 5 card:

**Have you ever been disciplined?**

**Have you ever systematically disciplined someone?**

**What did you do?**

**What could have made your experience better?**

After everyone has written their answers, ask if anyone would like to share their answers with the group. Discuss briefly.

2. Distribute copies of *The Way to Joy* and a copy of slide 29 from the Power Point Resources to each person. Read Luke 8:15 and explain that spiritual growth, just like evangelism, is a divine-human process. The Holy Spirit sanctifies believers who are obedient to Him. One part of the human side of the process is the effort that a believer exerts in obedient response to God's Word, confessing sins, sharing his faith, fellowshiping with other believers, etc. Another piece of the human side of sanctification is the role God desires for mature believers to disciple new (or less mature) believers. Explain that we are "zooming in" on the top half of the Good Soil E & D scale, focusing on basic discipleship of believers. Ask participants to do the exercise on the page created by slide 29: **In the column on the left, write the numbers that identify the order in which these new believer experiences occurred in your early Christian life.** Give two minutes for them to complete the exercise.

After they are done, have everyone get up from their seats and try to find someone who has the exact same order written on their paper. (It is very rare for this to occur. In teaching dozens of seminars with hundreds of people, it has only happened once that two people had the exact same order.) Emphasize that since we all grow differently, *The Way to Joy* can be used in a flexible manner. You could teach the lessons in a different order depending on the needs of your disciple if desired.

3. Distribute copies of slide 30 to all participants. Do the two exercises (True and False quiz and discussion on the purpose of the first two lessons). This is an enjoyable way to get to know this basic discipleship book. You might give a prize for whoever gets all the answers right. Have fun with it!

4. Assign a lesson from *The Way to Joy* to each participant (from lessons 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10). Each person should prepare to teach their lesson to a partner. After the preparation, everyone should find a partner, teach their lesson and be taught a different lesson by their partner. In this way, everyone will be familiar with at least two lessons and will have had practice walking someone through a lesson. Lesson 8 is about

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## **Picking the Harvest for Living**

**5-10 minutes (5)**



developing one's faith story, which can be another tool in the gospel-sharing toolbox

(Teaching or telling the stories is a *narrative* presentation of the gospel, the Chrono Bridge is a *propositional* presentation of the gospel, and one's faith story is an *experiential* presentation of the gospel.)

*(It would be a good idea to take a whole session to go through lesson 8 in The Way to Joy with your participants, helping them develop their faith story and taking time to practice it. If there is interest in continuing, set another time to do so. It is invaluable for disciple-makers to know their faith story, be able to tell it well, and be able to help new believers develop their faith stories. Take the time to do this to help your participants be more effective.)*

5. Have several pray, asking God to use your group to help people understand, embrace, and retain the good news of Jesus.

Research shows that if people do not put into practice what they learned from a seminar within 30 days, they will forget what they learned and it will not affect their lives. I encourage you to set up regular monthly or bi-weekly meetings with your group that would have multiple purposes:

- Review of material learned
- Practice peeling worldview onions
- Practice telling and teaching the Bible stories in *The Story of Hope*
- Practice using the Chrono Bridge to life
- Develop and practice telling your faith story
- Encourage one another to evangelize friends and family
- Pray one for another in your onion peeling, telling, and teaching of God's redemptive story

You and your group could be used of God very effectively in reaching people and seeing your church grow—but only if you make evangelism and discipleship a priority. One way to do that is to meet together to challenge and encourage one another to faithfully share the gospel. I pray that it will be so.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Arthur H. Thomas", written on a light-colored rectangular piece of paper.

14 October, 2010  
Harrisburg, PA