

A Wheat Street Bible Study
Faith, Planting and Growing: The Keys to a Faithful Life
Mark 4:26-34

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How is your faith?

What is the condition of your faith?

What are you believing God for?

Are you trying to do something or be something that really requires a move of God?

We can become so rational, logical and practical that we dismiss the miraculous.

While I am not advocating a non-thinking faith because I believe that God is the God of the mind, I am suggesting that faith can go against what makes sense.

Sometimes faith doesn't make sense because there are times when God delights in defying the odds. God delights in doing the impossible. God delights in using those who are less than. God delights and doing what can't be done.

Growing and Growing the Kingdom: A Reflexive Relationship

The growth of God's mission on earth is not contradictory to the development of ones own life. As we serve God in the church and in the world we are growing. To grow means we are pushing ourselves to become what God wants us to become at this point in our journey. This growth is not for selfish gain but rather for the growth of the Kingdom of God. We are not developing to get but rather developing to give. **The focus of Christian mission is always the other.** As we love and share with others we also receive what we give. As we grow God's Kingdom on earth it is fundamentally about us **sharing the Gospel, for the Gospel sake**, and leading the church toward growth. A church that isn't growing is a church that is dying and living contrary to the word of God.

Some Ways to Think About Growth:

1. Spiritually - we are in tune with what God wants and how God is moving
2. In the Word and Ways of God - deeper knowledge and relationship with God's word which helps us know God's ways
3. Reaching out to the world - being an externally focused church and Christian. We specialize in serving "non-members"
4. Serving those who have been impacted by the injustice of the world - asking what God is doing in the world in a liberative way and getting with God's acts of justice
5. Serving those who have hit rough spots in life - helping folk get through what they are going through
6. Sharing the good news with the world - sharing the preached and taught word with the world
7. Loving and caring for those who are walking with us in Kingdom work and building - taking care of those who are a part of the Body of Christ
8. Giving back to - tithing to support other ministries doing work we are not doing or aren't equipped to do
9. Numerically in ministry, service and worship - there should be increase in our numbers. This could be as simple as us committing not to miss Bible Study, Worship and other ministry events that contribute to our growth. **October: Every Member Every Sunday**
10. In giving:
 1. Time
 2. Talent
 3. Telling
 4. Loving
 5. Tithing - being a percentage giver (the 10% is the beginning. God wants all of us.)

Mark 4:26-29

26 He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, **27** and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. **28** The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. **29** But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

Growth is a mystery! If we are honest and as the scripture proclaims here, we don't know how growth occurs. I don't know why someone decides to join the church on any given Sunday. What we do know is that we have to scatter or sow seeds. **There is a relationship in that we have to act.** We have to do something. If I want my photography business to grow I have to take pictures. I have to update my website. I have to share my photos. I have to connect with galleries. I have to follow up on leads.

If we want the church to grow we have to spread the word. We have to let the world know we are here. We have to go out and touch the world. We have to follow up and reach out. We have to spread the word with integrity and quality. We have to spread the word in word and deed. The Gospel is good news and good news when you are broke is money. When you are lonely is a phone call, a hug, a card, a letter, an email. We have to make sharing the Gospel in real ways a priority in our ministry.

So we don't know why it all materializes but we know that our growth starts with us doing some initial work. Some scattering of seeds. After we have done what we are to do we can sleep. As we sleep something happens. The text is implying that God works while we sleep. We should work while it is day but at night we should take our rest. We don't need to worry or fret once we have done all we are required to do.

When we scatter something will happen. A crop will spring up. We have to ask ourselves when we look at our lives what have we planted and how does what we have planted show up in our lives and life of our church. What we experience in life has a relationship to what we sow / scatter. What are you scattering?
What seeds are you planting?
What is your crop? What are you growing?

Ephesians 4:17-32

17 Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds. **18** They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. **19** They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. **20 That is not the way you learned Christ!** **21** For surely you

have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. **22 You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24** and to **clothe yourselves with the new self**, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

25 So then, **putting away falsehood**, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. **26 Be angry but do not sin**; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **27** and **do not make room for the devil**. **28** Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. **29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths**, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. **30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. **31 Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, 32** and **be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another**, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

When we scatter the seeds of a new life something happens in our life. Happy people are happy people. There is a relationship between sowing / scattering and reaping. This principle has the power to transform our lives.

Mark 4:26-29

28 The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. **29** But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

The final part of this passage refers to the result of God’s work in our lives as we submit what we do to God. God will grow a crop and there will come a time when God will come back and reap what God has sown through us. There is a promise here that God will produce something from the earth. We have to scatter, do our work and God will give the increase.

1st Corinthians 3:1-9

And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. **2** I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still

not ready, **3** for you are still of the flesh. **For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations?** **4** For when one says, “I belong to Paul,” and another, “I belong to Apollos,” are you not merely human? **5** What then is Apollos? **What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each.** **6** I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. **7 *So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.*** **8** The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. **9 For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.**

Mustard Seed Faith: A Little Goes A Longways

Mark 4:30-32

30 He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? **31** It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; **32** yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

When we take our little faith and put it together big things happen!