

The Growing Process

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by how far away you are from where you want to be in life? Do you ever get discouraged because you work and work and work and sometimes see very little results for all your efforts? Do you ever grow weary of the struggle and wonder “surely, there must be an easier, faster way to be transformed and help others along the change process”?

Or is it just me?

I’ve been thinking a lot about Christianity and church and discipleship. I mean, how do people really grow? I’ve spent some time in the Scriptures and am growing in my convictions about the growing process.

In Mark 4, Jesus addresses this very subject through a series of parables. I’ve spent some time in The Parable of the Sower (Mark 4.1-20). Here are some things that seem to be true:

The Growing Process is hard. That’s just the way it is. It’s not necessarily hard all the time, but Jesus promises no easy road. Read through this parable and list all the things Jesus names which are ‘enemies’ to your life. Some of them are metaphorical, like the scorching sun, others are literal, like the “worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth.” How many obstacles to growing can you find in this passage? Be honest, what’s choking you these days? If growing seems hard at times, that’s normal. Accept that and allow the process to have its place.

There is no way to fast-track the journey. I’m not saying that you shouldn’t work at it, or that what you do doesn’t affect your growth. I’m just saying that much growth seems to happen over time. In fact, Mark 4.5 teaches that crops that spring up quickly often wither because they didn’t have time to take root. The kind of healing we need, the sense of shaping our gifts and skills, and the cultivating a deeper relationship simply takes time. Just as crops don’t pop up overnight, so the growing process is a journey.

The Growing Process happens mystically and mysteriously. I keep wanting a 3-step formula. My tendency is to work out the growing myself. There may be 1, 2, or 3 steps I can take. I know I am part of the process, but true growth happens mysteriously as we connect ourselves with a God who is Spirit. This is seen particularly in Mark 4.10-12, as Jesus describes “the *secret* of the kingdom of God.” Stop trying to force growth, in yourself and in others. The growing process may involve practical steps, but it is deeply mystical as well.

The Growing Process is centered around the person and words of God. My transformation is directly connected to time spent in the bible and in conversation with God. I can’t manufacture growth by a certain number of hours in the bible or in prayer, but without the bible and apart from a personal relationship with God, the growing process will be uprooted. Just get over it and read your bible. Talk with God about whatever comes to mind. He wants to be with you.

The Growing Process endures various seasons. Who wouldn’t like to be in a season of harvest all the time!?! Just like strong, healthy crops require seasons of tilling the soil, planting, watering, and waiting, so our lives endure various seasons. What season are you in? How much do you despise seasons of waiting? What if God has you right where you need to be? What are you asking from God in this season?

Jesus really wants me to grow. It’s like he’s saying, “people of the kingdom really do grow.” There really is life. Your life really can “produce a crop thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times” (Mark 4.8,20). You may not see it now, but the fact that you are even concerned about it reveals that God is already living in you and working. For if he wasn’t, you wouldn’t be so concerned about it.

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