



“GROWTH: Looking For A Plan”

Mark 4

Small Group Plan

In March of 1986 in Bel Air, Maryland, Roger Moore was given a traffic ticket for not having his toddler secured in a car seat. He was clearly not happy and muttered about the ticket as he fastened his son in his car seat. Nineteen minutes later they were both involved in a serious traffic accident. The toddler had a few minor injuries but was protected because he was securely buckled into his car seat. But unfortunately, Roger was killed. He had listened to the warning and fastened his son’s seat belt but had never buckled his own.

James 1:23 could be paraphrased this way:

“Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who ... died in Bel Air, Maryland, in 1986.”

Jesus often told stories using the growth of plants to evaluate the growth of faith in our lives. The “seed” in many of the stories represented the Word of God and the “soil” symbolized the hearts of the people hearing the Word. In Jesus’ parables some of the people were more open to hearing God than others and Jesus would often end this story by saying, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear” (Mark 4:9, 23, Luke 14:35).

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- When it comes to growing real plants, what has been your experience? How successful are you? Do you even try? Explain.
- When you were growing up, what kind of lifestyle seeds did you sow — “wild oats,” seeds of discontent, seeds of optimism, others?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— THREE PLANS THAT DON'T WORK —

The Rigid Heart – Mark 4:4, 15

⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up ... ¹⁵ Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.

- Why does God's word not take root in some hearts at all?
- What makes a heart hard?
- What could soften a hard heart?

The Shallow Heart – Mark 4:5-6, 16-17

¹⁹ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root ... ¹⁶ Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

- What most challenges our faith making us want to quit?
- How can a shallow faith be deepened?

The Crowded Heart – Mark 4:7, 18-19

⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain ... ¹⁸ Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; ¹⁹ but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.

- What activities and concerns of your daily life compete the most with God's activities and concerns?
- What does busyness do to personal faith?
- Why is "worry" so damaging to faith?

— ONE PLAN THAT WORKS —

The Open Heart – Mark 4:20, Luke 8:15.

²⁰ Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown ... ¹⁵ But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

- **HEAR THE WORD**
What most helps you to hear and really get God's Word?
- **RETAIN THE WORD**
Why should hearing God always be followed with obeying God?
- **PERSEVERE WITH THE WORD**
Where / how does Satan attack you?
- **PRODUCE FROM THE WORD**
What does Jesus mean by this amazing harvest?
New converts? Good habits? Godly character qualities?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- Do you think a person will be only one kind of "soil" throughout their entire life? Why or why not?
- What kind of soil best represents you right now? Explain.
- What can you do to improve the "crop" in your life?
- What specific "thorn of worry" can this group pray about with you?
- Close with prayerful commitments to God to follow **the plan that works**.