



Week 1 – January 6, 2013

WE Grow: The Introduction

Mark 4:1-8

¹ Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. ² He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: ³ "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ 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. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

Types of Soil

The footpath (verse 4) can be thought of as preoccupation. We do not often see sports, community involvement, and leisure as evil. And they are not evil. But things don't have to be evil to fulfill an evil end. Some of the most attractive and worthwhile activities can keep us so preoccupied that the seeds of love, faith, and grace never have a chance to penetrate our hearts.

The rocky soil (verses 5 and 6) displays the difference between character and reputation. Character is the roots – reputation is the exterior. When the character is shallow, the plant withers and dies. God doesn't want us to have a superficial relationship with Him. God wants us to go deep.

The thorns (verse 7) are the lure of wealth and material possessions. The most deceptive thing about money and stuff is that we expect them to give us more satisfaction and security than they are capable of providing. We are created to relate to people and to God – not to money and stuff.

Questions for Reflection

1. What preoccupies you? Are these preoccupations getting in the way of a growing relationship with God? How can you invite God into all areas of your life? What are some ways you can experience greater balance in life so that busyness doesn't get in the way of developing a deeper relationship with God?

2. Does a difference exist between your character and your reputation? If so, how big is the difference? Is there a difference between where others perceive you are in your relationship with God and where you really are? How are you going to grow your character in 2013, specifically on how you relate to God?

3. What are more important to you: people or possessions? Do you spend more time thinking about money and things or God? Has a possession ever provided you long-lasting and extreme happiness? What are some ways you can invite God to be a larger part of your life? How would your life change if your primary relationship was with God?

4. What are you going to do to have 2013 be the year you prepared the soil for God to produce a great crop in your life? What are you going to have to give up? What will you need to add? What do you think the crop might look like in your life?

This Week's Prayer Focus - Wesley's Covenant Prayer for Today

Pray this prayer daily. Spend some time focusing on a short passage or even a sentence or two of the prayer. Spend a little more time in silence listening to God. Be attentive to what God is trying to tell you.

I was once mine. From this point forward, I am yours.

Make clear my purposes in life.

Place me among my loved ones and expand my heart to love all.

Help me to think the things you want me to think,

say the things you want me to say,

and do the things you want me to do,

even if it means I am belittled, ignored, or criticized.

Give me people to encourage, serve, and love.

Give me times of peace and rest so I can love and be loved by you.

Let me be a light to a dark world so people can see you working in me.

Make me humble and remind me that everything I have is because of you.

*Thank you for times of happiness and prosperity
they are a gift.*

*Thank you for your presence and promise in days of sadness and hardship
I emerge stronger and wiser.*

Let me discover, embrace, and fulfill your will for my life.

With joy and in fullness,

*I give my possessions, my time, and my energy
to you and to your purposes.*

Almighty, holy, and blessed God:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

you are my true love and I am yours.

And so it is. Let the covenant I am making here on earth be acceptable and pleasing to you.

Amen.

This Week's Bible Verse

Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. – Ephesians 3:17

This Week's Challenge

Great things happen when we commit. Commit to participating in WE Grow during 2013. Commit to preparing your soil so that you can experience a fruitful life and a great harvest. Start this week. Starting today, do your absolute best to use the WE Grow journal and spend time with God daily.

Next Week – Soul Detox: Finding Rest in a Restless World