



Part I: Lesson I

Becoming Good Soil: Spiritual Growth

Fertile Soil: Starting Your New Life with Jesus



Welcome! Jesus welcomes and embraces you into His family. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we welcome you too. God's love has joined us together in Him as one family.

Welcome to your new life. When you became a Christian, a number of dynamic things occurred in both heaven and in your life. You crossed over from spiritual death to spiritual life because you've trusted Jesus to be your personal Savior and Lord. You have a new status with God and a new relationship with God's people. God's word says, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come"* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Following Jesus is the most important decision that anyone can make. It is the highest calling and the grandest destiny that anyone can experience. Our prayer and desire are for you to grow in your relationship with God and to become increasingly like Him. The Apostle Paul expressed this hope for his friends, and it is our hope for you.

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:9-14).

YOUR GROWTH GOAL



In this lesson, you will understand God's expectation and process for spiritual growth.

The spiritual life is often referred to as a journey. As with any journey, it happens one step at a time, one kilometer after another, and one day followed by another. Journeys are also marked by times of great achievements and celebrations, and great difficulties and obstacles. Some journeys take a lifetime. Your spiritual journey is for the rest of your life.

In this new life, you must grow. Plant life grows from seeds into mature plants. People grow, too, from infants to children to adults. You must grow spiritually.



Before you go any further, stop and ask God to help you understand His word, to help you experience his presence, and to become the person He wants you to be.

A PICTURE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH: The Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-20)



When Jesus wanted to make an important point, he told stories, often called parables. The simplicity of the parables makes them easy to remember, yet deep spiritual truths abound for us to both learn and experience. The following is the first parable recorded in Scripture.

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. He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that,

*"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,
and ever hearing but never understanding;
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"*

Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the word. 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. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 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. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 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. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

In this parable, there are four types of soils on which the seeds fall. *What are the characteristics of each soil? What kind of growth occurs in each soil?*

SOILS	CHARACTERISTICS	KIND OF GROWTH
Path		
Rocky Places		
Thorns		
Good		



Why does the seed/word on the path not grow?



Why does the seed/word on the rocky places not grow?



Why does the seed/word in the thorns not grow?



Why do you think that the seed/word in the good soil grows and produces a good crop?

What kind of soil do you want to be?

DIGGING DEEPER: SPIRITUAL GROWTH EXPLAINED



Besides telling stories, Jesus asked a lot of questions. Read what God's Word says about **spiritual growth** in the following Scriptures then answer the questions and discuss your thoughts with your friends. The answers are found in each Scripture.

I. WE ARE COMMANDED TO GROW

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good (1 Peter 2:2-3).

What must we do in order to grow in our salvation?

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen (2 Peter 3:18).

In what ways are we commanded to grow?

2. OUR PROCESS OF GROWTH

Jesus illustrated the progressive and mysterious nature of spiritual growth with this description.

This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come” (Mark 4:26-29).

What are the characteristics of Jesus' description of the kingdom of God?



When it comes to your spiritual growth, God is not in a hurry. There are no shortcuts. He is at work for an eternity.

3. THE AIM OF OUR GROWTH

Carefully examine the following three Scriptures for a common theme, as it will help you determine God's purpose for your spiritual growth.

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters (Romans 8:29).

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure (1 John 3:2-3).

What is the aim of your spiritual growth?

How is God transforming your life into His image?

What is one way you can become more like Jesus?

BECOMING GOOD SOIL: HOW YOU CAN GROW SPIRITUALLY



I. APPLYING THESE TRUTHS

What is soil? It's just dirt. No plant can grow without it. Some soils are good for growing things, and some are not. Go find some good dirt—some dirt that will be good for growing things. Pick it up and hold it in your hands.

Ask yourself this question: *what will it take to enrich your life so that you can become fertile soil?*

2. REFLECTING ON THESE TRUTHS

The Psalms are given to us for prayer, worship, and deeper reflection. Think deeply about Psalm 1:1-3 as it describes those who are growing toward maturity.

*Blessed is the one
 who does not walk in step with the wicked
 or stand in the way that sinners take
 or sit in the company of mockers,
 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
 and who meditates on his law day and night.
 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
 which yields its fruit in season
 and whose leaf does not wither—
 whatever they do prospers.*

3. COMMITTING TO THESE TRUTHS

Take some time with your mentor to discuss how you will apply these truths in your daily life. **Write these commitments below.**



With your mentor and other followers, pray together asking God to guide to your growth, strengthen and protect you, and provide for your daily needs.

Read | Peter 2:2-3 every day this week, “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

