



GET GROWING

TALK IT OVER

God's Path for Your Growth

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If you would like to watch the weekend message, visit www.saddleback.com/watch.

Open your group in prayer and remember that this is only a guide. Feel free to discuss each of the questions provided or simply dive deeper into just one. Before you close with prayer, take a few minutes to look over the Three Essential Questions at the end of the document.

Scriptures

Romans 12:2 (NIV84), 2 Peter 3:18 (NIV84), Colossians 1:9-10 (NIV84), Mark 4:1-9 (NIV84), Mark 4:14-20 (NIV84), Psalm 19:9-10 (NIV84), John 16:33 (NIV), 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 (NIV84), Luke 8:15 (NIV), Galatians 6:9 (NIV), Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NIV84), Revelation 3:20 (NIV84)

Questions

1. In order to "Get Growing" on "God's Path for Your Growth," a core habit is to communicate with God through the Bible and prayer. Romans 12:2 (NIV84) says, *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."* Do you believe that God can transform you? According to Romans 12:2, how do you avoid conforming to the *"pattern of this world"*? What does the verse say with regard to the mind? What three adjectives does the verse use to describe God's will? How do the Bible and prayer help you grow in your knowledge of God and His perfect "Path for Your Growth"?
2. Read Mark 4:1-9 aloud in your group. How does Jesus describe the seed that fell: (1) *"along the path,"* (2) *"on rocky places,"* (3) *"among thorns,"* and (4) *"on good soil"*? Notice how the seed is the same—but only the seed that fell on good soil *"produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times!"* The four soils represent different heart conditions or responses to the Word of God: (1) a hard heart (seed snatched away by deception), (2) a shallow heart (seed scorched by difficulty), (3) a distracted heart (seed suffocated by distractions), and (4) an open heart (seed sustained by discipleship). While growth is God's will for you—it's not guaranteed! How does the parable illustrate this? Going deeper: Why is our lack of fruitfulness not evidence of a lack of God's faithfulness? For personal reflection: What is the condition of your heart today?

3. The Good News is that when you have an open heart sustained by discipleship—learning to follow Jesus—God provides a simple pattern for His Word to bear fruit “*multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times!*” (1) Hear (listen), (2) Accept (receive God's Word and the Holy Spirit), (3) Apply (follow Him by faith), and (4) Repeat (continue in this simple pattern)! The two tools of: (1) Weekly worship, and (2) daily Bible reading and prayer—make space in your life for God to speak to you! Discuss what fertile soil for bearing fruit looks like—and doesn't look like—and God's simple pattern of hearing, accepting, and applying God's Word. What are some practical steps you can take this week to sustain your spiritual growth?

4. Mark 4:14-15 (NIV84) warns us: “*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.*” You have to fight against the lies of the enemy! Psalm 19:9-10 (NIV84) says, “*The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.*” Luke 8:15 (NIV) says, “*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.*” Discuss how placing a high premium on God's Word helps you defeat the tactics of the enemy. Why is perseverance necessary for fruitfulness? How can you encourage others to desire and appreciate God's Word as “*more precious than gold*”?

5. Jesus says in John 16:33 (NIV), “*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*” Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 (NIV84), “*We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.*” How do these passages help you understand God's sovereignty in the midst of your difficulties? The Bible makes it clear that in this life, you will experience trouble and persecution. You'll just have to persevere—like the good seed in Mark 4:1-9! As you do, what promises can you rely on according to the passages above?

6. Jesus says in Revelation 3:20 (NIV84), “*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*” Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NIV84) says, “*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*” Galatians 6:9 (NIV) says, “*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*” Growth is God's will for you—but how do you accomplish it? How do the promises in these verses encourage you to persevere? Discuss the steps you can take this week to “*Get Growing*” on “*God's Path for Your Growth.*”

Are you interested in the Bible and in helping small groups benefit from the weekend message? Well, you are in luck! Saddleback members like you create these discussion guides each week. If you are interested in joining the team, please email JasonW@saddleback.com.

Three Essential Questions

The following questions are intended to be open-ended and encourage members to consider how they and what they, or the group, can do as a result of hearing the message.

1. **What did you hear?** *What point in this message was most impactful for you?*
2. **What do you think?** *How did this message challenge, change, or affirm your thinking?*
3. **What will you do?** *How will you or your group put into practice what you've learned today?*

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