

Small Beginnings

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As we embark on this mission God has set before us we find ourselves at the very beginning. There is nothing that has been given, transferred, passed on, or willed to us. As a result we have the arduous and yet rewarding task of making the mental, emotional, spiritual, physical adjustment to plant and tend this area of the vineyard. I might add that however rewarding it is it doesn't come without its challenges. In the beginning of anything there are challenges and obstacles that are exclusive to it. There is a lot of figuring out the exact direction one should be heading in. The exact location one should be working in. The exact tools one should be using. The pain staking adjustment of learning the people you're working with. And so it goes on and on.

If we look at this in a metaphorical and or a comparative context we could look at it from the perspective of a farmer or gardener. The Scripture says in Job 8:7. As we consider the mustard seed which is the smallest of all seeds and yields one of the largest trees or harvest on the planet. If the mustard seed was despised because of its size we would not see the miracle of how something so small could produce something so great. God has promised us that no matter how humble the beginning is He could do a great work. Jesus is a wonderful example of this, one who had very humble beginnings but the latter product was greatly increased.

The beginning is a place where you can grow but before you begin to grow there is a preparatory period that must take place. There are some things that have to happen before the growth begins. When a gardener/farmer starts to plant a crop/garden he must first prepare the ground. This involves digging, weed removal and in some cases using pesticide to rid the area of unwanted pests. What happens most times in our lives is that we want to start growing without going through the prepping period because it's not comfortable. The things that we need to remove won't be exposed until we start the digging process. When we start digging we must use the right tools to maximize the effectiveness of breaking up the ground to give our seeds the best chance of survival. Part of the digging process in this sense involves having the right people or tools if you will around us to help excavate our ground. In the digging process there could be hurt, misunderstanding, misconceptions and other things that could seem to threaten the growth process. But this is necessary because this is how we clean out those things that don't need to be in the planting area. Having the hard conversations, working through the challenges of starting something new could be beautiful because we get to know each other in a more intimate way and learn to appreciate each other's differences and the specific gifts and talents God has given each one

The digging is where God through others breaks up our ideologies and presuppositions. All the things we thought were one way we find out aren't that way at all. We can't know somethings until we ourselves are immersed in it. In the digging is where we find the worms, beetles and different insects that if left untreated or dealt with could destroy or impede growth later. The cleaning of the ground is where we get rid of bad habits, old ways of thinking, past hurts, disappointments, and vices that would keep us from growing. That's why the bible tells us to lay aside every weight and every sin that so easily besets us.

The thing is all pest are not bad. Like in the earth everything has a purpose. Earthworms for example help aerate the ground by continually burrowing through the earth to keep the ground soft. Those insects should be left alone. It's good for the health of the seed. We need people like that in our lives to burrow

through our stuff and help us stay pliable asking us the hard questions (How things with the wife or husband, how's your spiritual walk, do you have any vices I can help you overcome.) We need that. Then there are harmful bugs that are just pest. They want to destroy everything in its path. They may look like a useful person but they are cankerworms they will destroy your crop. They get close to you just to find out your intimate secrets to hold it against you later. They are a nuisance they just don't seem to go away. They need to be removed so you can grow healthy. That's why we need to be discerning to know the difference.

Then we have the weeds that need to remove. Like the insects once the crop start to grow weeds will also grow and if we are not careful we can mistake weeds for a plant of benefit. Weeds can choke the very life out of the plant and they can also absorb all the nutrients from the ground. So it is with situations we allow into our space. It's not beneficial to us and all it does is choke the very life out of us. For instance, taking on a project the God didn't approve that sucks our energy and time. Or better yet getting involved with a situation that doesn't concern us and we spend energy on the issue with no benefit to us and takes us of course from where God wants to take us. We think because we're doing something that we're being productive but the growth we see is just weeds and they need to be removed. We must stay focused on the assignments God has given to us individually and corporately. So we can maximize growth we must continually remove weeds through prayer asking God for the strength to do it and the eyes for recognizing weeds from produce.

As we begin to grow we must fertilize the planted area. Fertilization is a part of the nurturing process. After the digging, dealing with pest, and weed removal we must fertilize to help the crop stay healthy and ensure that it is getting the proper nutrients. The crazy thing is that fertilizer is mostly composed of dead things and things that have previously been used. It would seem like if we are trying to produce something healthy and good for consumption we would use something clean and unused. But fertilizer is sometimes manure, old food, leaves. Most of the times fertilizer smells bad. Sometimes God seem to put stuff on us that just down right stinks. We have trials, tests, conflict, and seemingly undue pressure. And sometimes just life! Even in our nurturing we experience things that aren't pleasant to the sight, taste or smell. Nevertheless, this process is one of the most essential. It replenishes the things that we lost. Some of the things that we allowed to die that we shouldn't have. Some of the things we lost that we shouldn't have, will be replenished in this process. Even the things we have given away that we shouldn't have will be restored in this process. However, even in this God said He would work it together to be beneficial to us and for us.

After we have broken up the fallow ground, taken care of the bugs, pulled weeds, fertilized, then we must water to keep the ground moist. The water causes the seed to germinate or break open. When the seed begins to open there is a stretching that takes place. Layers are peeled back the ground gets muddy. This could be a messy part in the scheme of things. Even though we go through all these processes just like that seed under the earth that cannot be seen but is growing sometimes we feel like because we are at the beginning we can't see the growth but truth is the stretching is producing something that we can't always see right away, the constant rain of trials is producing something. So don't be discouraged because the beginning is small and you can't see much right now that's just a part of the process.

Although the beginning is pain staking, frustrating, and bewildering. Please do yourself a favor and don't despise it. What will it take to not look at our circumstances and focus on the will of God? The more we

know of God, the more we understand that the things He allows is always for our good and we can trust that. We can depend on it.