



ARE YOU DISCOURAGED WITH YOUR GROWTH?



Last week I worked in my garden for the first time all season. I pulled weeds and planted some Zinnia and Columbine. I know I'm late. I should have done it a few weeks ago but other more urgent things took my time.

This morning I went out to check on their progress and I'm bummed. I don't see any signs of growth. Not one tiny poke through the soil and I've faithfully watered them, doused them with Miracle Grow and the weather has been great. I keep hoping maybe there is something I can do to make them mature a little faster. Any tips?

God's creation has a lot to teach us about how growth takes place. For example, a human embryo takes nine months of womb life to develop into a healthy infant. No matter how well an expectant mother cares for herself and her unborn child, she cannot hurry her baby's development. If she neglects her care she can do damage to her unborn child's growth but she is powerless to speed it up.

A Chinese bamboo plant takes five years of faithful watering and fertilizing to see any signs growth. Yet sometime during the fifth year, the tree sprouts and then grows ninety feet in just six weeks. But without the regular watering and fertilizing by the farmer, the growth won't take place.

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What can we learn from nature's lessons? I see people who get frustrated when they don't see progress in their emotional and/or spiritual growth. They read their Bible, go to church, hire a coach or see a counselor and are part of a small group. But they still find themselves struggling with selfishness, envy, anger, insecurity, feelings of unworthiness, and the fear of man. We become impatient with our seeming lack of emotional and/or spiritual growth and conclude that what we're doing isn't working and are tempted to give up. Please don't do that.

Although you can't control how fast you grow, you can do things that make your growth more likely. Just as a farmer faithfully tills the soil, waters, pulls weeds and fertilizes so that his seedlings will grow into healthy strong plants, we too can do things that make it more likely that our growth will occur. And, in the same way if a farmer neglects his crop and does not do those things, he will be less likely to reap a robust crop.

So friends here are three things we can do to make our own spiritual and emotional and growth more likely even if it seems slow:

1. Plant seeds. It seems obvious but if we don't put good things into our mind we can't expect growth. If a farmer never plants his seeds, it doesn't matter if he waters, nothing will take root. Take time to read God's word but don't just read. Reflect and ask yourself, "Is there one thing here that I can practice this week?"

2. Pull the weeds. One summer I got too busy and didn't pull any weeds from June all the way through August. I have three large perennial gardens and by the end of summer, they looked ugly. There were flowers in there but they were crowded and hidden by all the gigantic weeds. Pride and selfishness are like weeds and have deep roots. When they rule our life, all the good fruit that God might be growing can't be seen. Weed regularly and you may see more growth that was hidden by the weeds.

3. Fertilize. Most plants do better when you feed them. In the same way we need to nourish ourselves as well as allow others to nourish us to ensure our best growth. Hebrews 3:13 says, "Let us encourage one another day after day lest any one of us become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." When we are blind to it or refuse to hear the constructive feedback of others, we won't grow like we should. Invite trusted people to give you feedback.