

# Growth – Part IV

## *Good Ground*

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# Growth: Outline

- ▶ Part I – Introduction
  - ▶ What is a biblical model for growth?
- ▶ Part II – Purpose
  - ▶ What is the biblical purpose for growth?
- ▶ Part III – Hindrances to Growth
  - ▶ What causes “failure to thrive”?
- ▶ Part IV – Good Ground
  - ▶ Explore God’s plan for “good ground” growth
- ▶ Possible future topics:
  - ▶ Growth Stimuli
  - ▶ Work of Holy Spirit

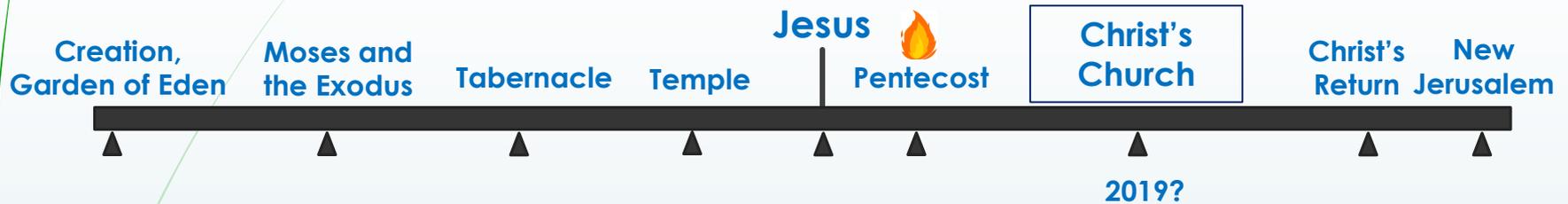
# Part I Summary: Biblical Model of Growth

**Psalm 1:1-4** Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.

- Righteous are like a tree; strong, growing, rooted
- Planted in next to water, the life giving stream of the Holy Spirit (John 7:38)



# Part II: God's Glory Thru the Ages



- Spiritual growth is becoming more like Jesus. But why?
- What is man's purpose for existence?
- What is the biblical paradigm for life purpose?
- **Answer: God's Glory!**

**1 Cor 6:20** For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

# Part III Summary: Hinderances to Growth

**1 Cor 3:1** And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; 3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

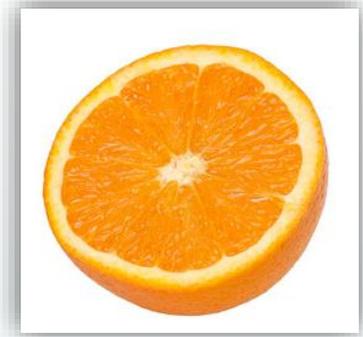
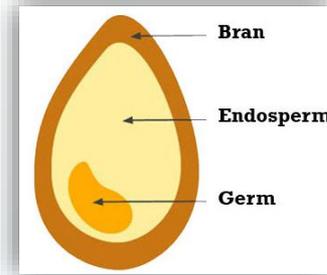
- ▶ What caused this Spiritual "Perpetual Infancy" at Corinth?
- ▶ Why don't we grow?
- ▶ Jesus answers these questions in the parable of the sower (Matt 13, Mark 4, Luke 8)
  - ▶ Stoney ground: shallow earth, no roots
  - ▶ Thorny ground: word of truth choked out

# Parable of the Sower, 4 Types of Ground

- ▶ Seed received differently by different types of soil
  - ▶ **Wayside**, but birds came quickly and ate it
  - ▶ **Stony Ground**, not much depth of earth
  - ▶ **Thorny Ground**, choked out by thorns
  - ▶ **Good Ground**, grew and produced a crop
- ▶ Jesus using a metaphor to illustrate how people react upon hearing the truth
  - ▶ **Wayside** – hard heart, no penetration, word is removed
  - ▶ **Stony** – Received with gladness at first, but unwilling to yield
  - ▶ **Thorny** – Heard the word, but did not guard against worldliness
  - ▶ **Good** – Soft heart, ready to obey, healthy growth

# How Did a Hebrew Think About Agriculture?

- ▶ God's design for agriculture:
  - ▶ Reproductive seed
  - ▶ Productive fruit



**Gen 1:12** And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

- ▶ Seed and yield was God's perfect design from the beginning
- ▶ Seeds are pre-programmed to reproduce when the conditions are right

**Lev 27:30** And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's. It is holy to the LORD.

- ▶ Fruit/Seed tithe - shows how important produce was.

# How Did a Hebrew Think About Agriculture?

**Deut 22:9** "You shall not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed, lest the yield of the seed which you have sown and the fruit of your vineyard be defiled.

- ▶ God regulated the planting of grape seed because it was holy
- ▶ This is how Hebrews thought about and seeds and produce
- ▶ It was one of the keys to prosperity (or poverty curses Deut 28)
- ▶ Now, back to the parable

**Mark 4:19**...the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

- ▶ The problem with thorny ground is it chokes out growth and makes a plant (person) unfruitful

# “Good Ground”

**Mark 4:8** But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred." 9 And He said to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

**20** But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

- Thirty-, Sixty-, Hundred-fold
- Modern Wheat: 110 seeds/plant, w/germ. losses→90:1, 5-10% harvest loss→80:1
- Ancient grains and methods→8-10:1
- 100-fold meaning? Maximum yield possible? Divine measure?



**Gen 26:12** Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the LORD blessed him. 13 The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous;

- Point of the good ground seems to be ABUNDANT fruit

# “Good Ground” In Pictures



**This is likely what Jesus’ listeners thought of**

# What Does “Good Ground” mean? – 3 things

**Matt 13:23** But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.“

**Mark 4:20** But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.“

**Luke 8:15** But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

## 3 Characteristics of “good ground”

- **Hears** (G191: give audience, listen with attention)
- **Receives**
  - *Matt 13, Understands: G4920 -to put together, comprehend*
  - *Mark 4, Accept: G3858 to receive, embrace with assent and obedience*
  - *Luke 8, Keep: G2722 to hold fast*
- **Bears fruit** (G2592: to be fertile or fruit-bearing)

# When Trees Fail to Fulfill Purpose

**Matt 3:10** And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

**Matt 7:15** "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

- Unfruitful trees are good for nothing but to be cut down and thrown into the fire (7:19)

# Fruit Fail

What's wrong with this picture?



# Grace to the Fruitless Fig Tree

**Luke 13:6** He also spoke this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. 7 Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' 8 But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. 9 And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'"

- Fig tree may be a symbol for Israel (Hos 9:10, Joel 1:7)
- The point is that a fruitless tree is a useless tree
- Intercession and grace shown here to rejuvenate the tree
- God is merciful....but digging and fertilizing may hurt

**Heb 12:6** For whom the lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. "...**11** Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

# “True Vine” Fruit

**John 15:1** "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.



# Seed Dies → Produces Grain

John 12:12-22 Triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Some Greeks seek to see Jesus. Philip and Andrew tell Jesus about this...

**John 12:23** But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. 25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

- Vs. 24 Jesus may be referring to himself and why he has to die
- Vs. 25 Jesus definitely referring to his followers

# This is Hard, but Glorious

**John 12:24** Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. 25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

## ► Why is this hard?

### ► we die (vs. 24)

**Col 3:3** For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

**1 Cor 15:31**...I die daily.

### ► we hate our lives in this world (vs. 25)

### ► we follow Jesus (on the Calvary's road to death) (vs. 26a)

### ► we become servants (vs. 26b)

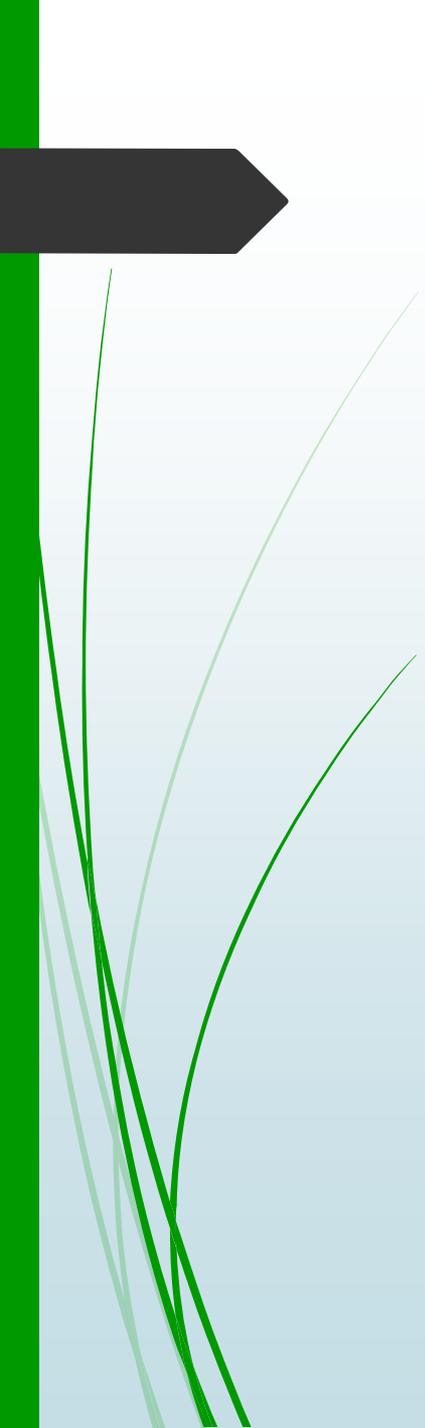
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- ▶ Why is this glorious?
  - ▶ we bear much fruit (vs. 24)
  - ▶ we keep our lives for eternal life (vs. 25)
  - ▶ we join Jesus where he is in glory (vs. 26a)
  - ▶ the Father honors us (vs. 26b)
- ▶ Truth taught by the metaphor of a grain of wheat dies and grows to produce much grain...30, 60, 100 fold
- ▶ Likewise, we must die to ourselves to be productive disciple of Christ.

# My Word Shall Not Return Void

Isa 55:6 Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. 8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. 10 "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, 11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. 12 "For you shall go out with joy, And be led out with peace; The mountains and the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. 13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; And it shall be to the LORD for a name, For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."



Homework Assignment

***What is Fruit?***