

How to Become Good Ground for God's Blessings

Wednesday night at Bible study, our pastor's wife asked a powerful question: "How come two people can hear the same message but one person is blessed by it and the other walks away unchanged, saying, 'I didn't get anything from that'?"

She gave the analogy of how you can plant a seed in one place and it grows up strong and healthy, but you can plant that same seed in poor soil and it grows up withered and weak. So the problem in that case is not the seed but the quality of the soil.

She challenged us to prepare the "soil" of our hearts before we come into church, ready to receive the good seed of God's Word. Then we can receive the blessings that come from it.

I challenge you to do the same thing in your daily life. Many of us aren't experiencing change because the good seed of God's Word is being scattered on either stony ground or being choked by thorns and can't grow. If you want to see change and emotional healing, it is your responsibility to ensure your heart is good ground on which God's Word can fall and grow.

Let's look at three types of emotional ground:

1. Stony ground. This is a heart that's rooted in unforgiveness or disobedience. Let's discuss unforgiveness first. People hurt you, and you refuse to forgive them and move on. You feel justified in nursing your hurt. In fact, you've built a shrine to it! But God can't move on a stony heart; by refusing to let Him replace your heart of stone with a heart of flesh, you are blocking your blessings.

Have the courage to feel again. Feeling can hurt, but He has given you the Holy Spirit to comfort you. You have to trust

that if you release the people who hurt you to God, He will heal any wounds left behind:

“To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified” (Is. 61:3).

If the issue is disobedience, then the path is clear: Confess the sin to the Lord, and repent (turn away from it). He is faithful and just to forgive you!

2. Thorny ground. This is a heart and mind full of worry, anxiety, fear and depression. All of these things impede your ability to hear and believe God’s Word. As such, the Word can’t sink deep and receive nourishment, or it either fails to grow or it grows up distorted by worldly influence and selfish desires. Jeremiah 2:21 describes this condition concerning the people of Israel: “Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?”

3. Good ground. This is a heart that is humble and obedient. You leave the door open for God’s grace to enter. You recognize that in God is everything that you need and that He cares for those He loves. That includes you!

If you sense that you are dealing with either stony ground or thorny ground, I’ve got an exercise that can help to break up the stony ground and clear away the thorns. So will you do a favor for me? Get a piece of paper and a pen, and write down everything that concerns you. Write about any past hurts that still haunt you or anything that worries you or makes you afraid.

Let God know everything that is on your heart. He doesn’t care about grammar or how you write. All He cares about is that one of His children is seeking Him and needs answers. Nobody needs

to see what you wrote but you.

Writing everything down can help you see clearly about what is going on in your mind—and start to make sense of it. When you write your thoughts down, they have less power over you. Seeing the words written out can also help you discern whether what you wrote is the truth according to God's Word or a lie from the enemy. I think of this exercise as "praying on paper," a visual way to cast your burdens on the Lord and release them to Him.

In fact, I did this exercise myself recently because I had many concerns about family members and ministry. They were weighing on my mind, and I was having trouble letting them go. But after I released these concerns to the Lord through the writing exercise, I felt calm and confident that God is perfecting everything that concerns me.

Another helpful exercise is to write down what you hope your future will be. That will encourage you and help you to make wiser choices in the present to shape that future.

Don't delay. God wants to bless you abundantly in all areas of your life. But you must do your part and prepare yourself to receive!

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