



The Plant Metaphor for Discipleship

Mark 4:26-29 ²⁶ And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; ²⁷ and goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts up and grows--how, he himself does not know. ²⁸ "The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. ²⁹ "But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

1. Seed Stage

1 Peter 1:23 ²³ for you have been born again not of **seed** which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and abiding word of God.

1 Corinthians 15:35-38 ³⁵ But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶ You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; ³⁷ and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a **bare grain**, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸ But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the **seeds** a body of its own.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 ⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*.

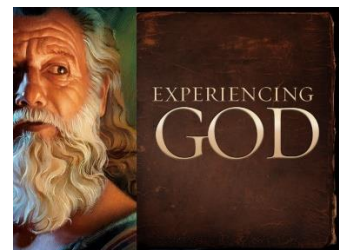
John 12:24-26 ²⁴ "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a **grain** of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ "He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. ²⁶ "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.



Matthew 17:20 ²⁰ And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard **seed**, you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you.

Type of Studies/Educational Techniques:

- Pastor led Celebration Worship Services
- Open small group basic level practical Bible book studies- Proverbs, Jonah, John, Colossians, James
- Open small group or personal foundational/milk level studies and disciplines
 - “Experiencing God” by Henry Blackaby
 - “The New Way of Living, Foundational Bible Studies” by Larry Kreider
 - “How to Study Your Bible” by Kay Arthur
 - “Teach Me How to Pray” by Kay Arthur
 - “Crazy Love” by Francis Chan
 - “Fruits of the Spirit” by Beth Moore
 - “Believing God” by Beth Moore
 - Crown Financial ministries and studies



- Personal short Bible devotionals
- A person from the Fruit Stage should personally mentor, counsel, coach, and help these baby/seed believers (Men with men and women with women)

Marks:

- Spiritual new birth, regeneration, conversion (John 3, 2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Christ as Savior
- Knowledge of repentance and salvation from a biblical perspective
- Introduced to the promises of God
- Understanding the fruits of the Holy Spirit and beginning to display them
- Inner reality of life change begins to have outward expression, confession
- Water baptism- public identification with Christ
- Tithing/Stewardship
- Beginning to learn how to hear from God, short quiet times of solitude and prayer
- Beginning to realize the presence of God in every aspect of life
- Fellowshipping with other believers
- Beginning to share what God has done in them, being a witness
- Personal prayer journaling
- Peace with God

2. Root Stage

Revelation 22:16-17 ¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. **I am the root** and the descendent of David, the bright morning star." ¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

Ephesians 3:16-21 ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, **being rooted and grounded** in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹ to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

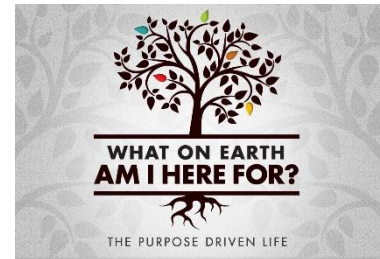


Colossians 2:5-10 ⁵ For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good **discipline** and the **stability** of your faith in Christ. ⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ having been firmly **rooted** *and now being built up* in Him and **established** in your faith, just as you were instructed, *and overflowing with gratitude.* ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. ⁹ For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

2 Kings 19:30 And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again **take root downward** and bear fruit upward.

Type of Studies/Educational Techniques:

- Closed small group root level doctrinal Bible book studies- Genesis, Exodus, Isaiah, Hosea, Matthew, Luke, Acts, Romans
- Closed small group or personal establishment level studies and disciplines
 - “Share Jesus Without Fear” by William Fay, or other biblical evangelism studies
 - “Radical” & “Follow Me” by David Platt
 - “Purpose Driven Life” by Rick Warren
 - “The Key to Triumphant Living” by Jack Taylor
 - “Breakthrough Prayer: The Power of Connecting with the Heart of God” by Jim Cymbala
 - “Discerning the Voice of God” by Priscilla Schier
 - “Kingdom Men” by Adrian Rogers
- Biblical Worldview studies, breaking down the distinctions of sacred and secular
 - Marriage, family, and sexuality
 - Abortion
 - False religious systems
 - Science and God
 - “Total Truth” by Nancy Pearcey



Marks:

- Christ as Lord, filled, immersed, and walking in the Holy Spirit
- Begin to realize transformational spiritual character habits and traits
- Knowledge of the spiritual giftings by the Holy Spirit
- Taught principles on how to share their faith to others with love
- More fully realizing the presence of God in every aspect of life, developing the mind of Christ
- Realizing the promises of God
- Learning how to give above and beyond
- Have a definite Bible reading plan and consistent quiet time with the Lord
- Developing deep care and concern for other people
- Learning how to give up rights: fasting, simplicity, solitude, etc.
- Peace in God

3. Growth Stage

2 Peter 1:2-12 ² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; ³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. ⁵ Now for this very reason also, **applying all diligence**, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge; ⁶ and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if these *qualities* are yours and **are increasing**, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, **be all the more diligent** to make

certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹ for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. ¹² Therefore, I shall always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you *already* know *them*, and have been established in the truth which is present with *you*.

2 Peter 3:18 ¹⁸ but **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Ephesians 4:13-16 ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to **grow up** in all *aspects* into Him, who is the head, *even* Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the **growth** of the body for the building up of itself in love.



Hebrews 5:14 - 6:3 ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. **Hebrews 6:1** Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us **press on to maturity**, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And this we shall do, if *only* God permits.

Philippians 3:12-16 ¹² Not that I have already obtained *it*, or have already become perfect, but I **press on** in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, ¹⁴ I **press on** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; ¹⁶ however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.

Jude 1:20 ²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 3:6-9 ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the **growth**. ⁷ So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the **growth**. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

Type of Studies/Educational Techniques:

-Closed small group enriching level Bible book studies- Historical books, Prophetic books, Wisdom literature, Epistles to the churches

-Closed small group precepts Bible studies from Kay Arthur

-Closed small group servant-leadership development classes- learning what kind of leader they are

-“You Were Made for More: The Life You Have, the Life God Wants You to Have” by Jim Cymbala

- Closed small group training in biblical counseling, mentoring, coaching, and helping (care)
 - “Counseling by the Book” by David Pennelly
- Closed small group spiritual warfare Bible studies
 - “The Invisible War: What Every Believer Needs to Know about Satan, Demons, and Spirit Warfare” by Chip Ingram
 - “Bait of Satan” by John Bevere
 - “Praying God’s Word: Breaking Free from Spiritual Strongholds” by Beth Moore
 - “When the Enemy Strikes” by Charles Stanley

Marks:

- Development of spiritual gifts and God’s purposes for one’s life in regard to talents and abilities, understanding where they fit in the body of Christ, finding their identity in Christ Jesus
- Apprentice work in spiritual giftings
- Becoming a faithful witness of the things of God
- Learning to walk by faith and not by sight
- Memorizing and meditating on the Word of God each day
- Identification of generational sins and personal strongholds and having breakthrough to conquer them with the power of the Holy Spirit
- Living a consistent sanctified life, consecrated to God
- Developing trust in the promises of God
- Using past hurts and experiences to help others
- Become more and more established in giving up rights to God and others
- Peace of God through trials and tribulations, developing persistence and endurance

4. Fruit Stage

John 15:1-8 "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 it, 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, so 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, he **bears much fruit**; for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ "By this is My Father glorified, that you **bear much fruit**, and so **prove to be My disciples**."



Mark 4:20 ²⁰ "And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it, and **bear fruit**, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."

Isaiah 11:1-2 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will **bear fruit**. ² And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

Matthew 7:16-23 ¹⁶ "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes*, nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ "Even so, **every good tree bears good fruit**; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ "So then, **you will know them by their fruits**. ²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. ²² "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

Colossians 1:9-10 ⁹ For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, **bearing fruit** in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Galatians 5:22-25 ²² But the **fruit** of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Type of Studies/Educational Techniques:

- Closed small group studies oversight and discernment level Bible study books- 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Daniel, 1 & 2 Peter, Revelations
- Closed small group ongoing discipleship training studies
 - Systematic Theologies
 - Studying biblical languages
 - Exegetical studies guided by the Holy Spirit using biblical languages and scholarly commentaries
 - Preaching classes and training
- Closed small group leadership level studies
 - “Miracles” by C.S. Lewis
 - “Strategic Disciple Making” by Aubrey Malphurs
 - “Multiply” by Francis Chan
 - “When God’s Spirit Moves” by Jim Cymbala



Marks:

- Completely following Christ’s teachings, mastery level in spiritual fruits and disciplines
- Love one another unconditionally
- Abiding deeply in Christ Jesus, praying without ceasing
- Poured out to produce spiritual fruit in areas of spiritual giftedness
- Leading people in discipleship themselves- mentoring, counseling, coaching, and helping
- Consistently doing evangelism and serving the needs of others in ministry
- Taking up their cross daily and following the Lord with persistence and endurance, no quit in them, relentless pursuit of the Lord and His will
- All spiritual wisdom and discernment
- Ministering peace and grace
- Resting in the promises of God in every way
- Able to biblically and lovingly correct and discipline the saints in the church
- Spiritual oversight as a servant