



CORNERSTONE REFLECTION GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 1, 2024

Title: Cultivate: Growth Inhibitors

Preacher: Rev. Matt Tuggle

Scripture: Matthew 13:18-23

When teaching about the Kingdom of God, Jesus often spoke in parables in order to cause people to reflect and think about his words. In this week's sermon, we focus on Jesus' explanation of the Parable of the Sower in which he uses the imagery of soil to describe the receptivity of the heart. In his desire to yield good things in us and around us (Fruit of the Spirit), God is constantly sowing seed within us. However, there are times when the seed bounces off of us (like the hard path), or our relationship with God lacks depth (the rocky ground), or the growth becomes choked out by the cares of the world (seed sown among thorns). In contrast, we seek to cultivate a life that bears fruit by softening, deepening, and pruning our soil. In turn, making our hearts more receptive to what God wants to grow in us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about this sermon? Was there an idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. Before any growth can happen, there needs to be a softening and openness to what God is doing around us. How can you be more open to what God is doing in your life?
3. For most of us, there is an ebb and flow to the depth of our faith. There are seasons when it is exciting to practice our faith and seasons when it feels boring and mundane. But real transformation happens over the long haul through consistent prayer and practice. How do you handle times when your spiritual

growth seems slow or stagnant? What are some practical ways you can deepen your relationship with God?

4. Jesus says the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word (Matthew 13:22). How do these things inhibit our growth and how can we guard against them?
5. Which type of soil do you feel best represents your heart at this moment? Why?
6. How can you be intentional about cultivating “good soil” in your life?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

In September, we are focusing on cultivating a life with God where **love** can grow within us. Throughout this month, we invite you to join us in praying this prayer from St. Francis of Assisi, each day:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.*

Before you echo St. Francis’ prayer, spend a few moments in silence to quiet your mind, and as you pray, think about what these words mean to you. What might the implications of this powerful prayer be in your life?