

The Soil Influences Growth

by Shane Idleman

The sermon teaches that the condition of our hearts, or the soil, is crucial for the growth of God's Word in our lives.

Duration: 54:10

Scripture: Matthew 13:3

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Faith Development"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of the soil in which we plant God's Word, highlighting that the soil determines growth. It discusses the parable of the sower from Matthew 13, illustrating the different types of soil representing people's hearts. The sermon addresses the responsibility of hearing God's Word and applying it, as well as the dangers of doubt, the cares of the world, and hyper grace teachings. It encourages returning to God, examining the soil of our hearts, and trusting in God's timing for growth and character development.

Transcript

This message really did influence me in a lot of different ways as I was studying and just realizing that the soil, the soil that we put God's Word, that's what influences the growth. See, there's nothing wrong with the Word of God, that's the seed. There's nothing wrong with that.

But it's the soil we put that seed in that determines growth. And I joked about it last year, and I'll bring it up again, but we used to eat a lot of watermelons out on the front yard of my mom's house. And no matter what happened, I never saw a watermelon seed grow out of that concrete.

It just sat there and sat there for weeks and they would get crusty and blow away, right? But when I took the water hose and sprayed them off into the dirt on the side, next summer we had a wonderful watermelon patch there. What was the difference? The soil. The soil determines everything.

So you can hear the Word of God and shut it out. You can see the things of God and block it. You can hear and shut your ears to what God is trying to say.

And the Word of God is so powerful that it's like seed. If you plant it in the right soil, it will grow. It will flourish.

God will move in that atmosphere. So let's talk about that tonight. This is where we find ourselves in Matthew chapter 13.

Jesus said, on the same day, or it's actually recorded, Matthew, Jesus isn't speaking yet. On the same day, Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea, and great multitudes were gathered together to him so that he got into a boat and set. And the whole multitude stood on the shore.

Then he spoke many things to them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell in stony places where they did not have much earth, and immediately they sprang up.

But because they had no depth of earth, when the sun was up, they were scorched. And because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them.

But other seeds fell on good ground and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some 60, some 30. And then he goes on to say, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Now, this is interesting, because what we're hearing right now is the word of God.

If you plant this in the correct soil, there will be spiritual growth. And I think that's why so many people are bored by the Bible, is because they're not planting it in the correct soil. They're not planting it in the soil of their heart.

And what Jesus is saying here, there's four types of soil we read about, and he's gonna clarify it later. And when he says, whoever has ears to hear requires responsibility on our part. And I would love to really bring this point home, but I have so many times that you're probably sick of hearing James 1.22, be doers of the word and not hearers, only deceiving yourself.

But that's what this has to do. And Jesus says, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. He's not talking about these.

He's talking about spiritual ears, if you would. Spiritual, there's a spiritual sense, a Holy Spirit. He who has ears to hear, let him hear requires responsibility on our part.

So when you hear the word of God, the power's in the application. And when you don't apply it, we don't have ears to hear. It's in one ear and out the next.

So that whole phrase there denotes responsibility on the heart of the hearer. And the return is not up to us. When he says 100 fold, 60 fold, 30 fold, the return is not up to us.

And so many people get frustrated. Well, this isn't happening, or this isn't happening, or this isn't happening. All we're called to do is plant the seed.

We're not called to sit there in water and harvest it all the time and wait and wait and wait. Why is it not growing? The growth is determined by God. All we do is plant the seed of God's word in our lives through speaking to others, or writing, or emails, or spending time with them and investing them.

In another spot, Jesus said, "Consider the lilies of the field and how they grow." Who grows those lilies? God. God grows those lilies. And I was reading this week and it really stuck out.

Oswald Chamber said, "Many of us refuse to grow where we are put." God puts us in certain places so we can grow, but we refuse to stay put and we keep moving to different soil or different places. And God says, no, stay there and you're gonna grow there. Nope, I'm gonna find a different church, or I'm gonna find a different house.

I'm gonna find a different spouse. I'm gonna find a different area to live. I'm gonna find, I'm gonna move.

God says, no, you need to stay there and grow. But we don't want to do that often because it hurts. That growing process is not easy.

And then he goes on to say in verse 10, "And the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?' He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, "but to them it has not been given. "For whoever has, to him more will be given, "and he will have abundance. "But whoever does not have, "even what he has will be taken away from him." Verse 13, "Therefore I speak to them in parables, "because seeing they do not see." The responsibility there, they do not see.

Jesus isn't saying they can't see. He's saying they don't see, that they don't want to see. "In hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand." And let me just stop there for a minute.

This happens a lot in church, and we see this here. We can preach, I can preach my heart out. We can take the verses apart.

We can give wonderful application, but people are like this. Well, I did my church for the week. Ears to hear? They don't have ears to hear.

If we would open our ears and say, Lord, what do you want to say to me? What areas do you want to work in my life? We could leave here, I believe, transformed, because God has spoken his word. Not my opinion, his word. But so many people come, and they listen, and because they feel convicted, and because they went to church, they're good.

But they don't have ears to hear. They're not receptive to what God wants to say to them. And in them, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says, "Hearing, you will not hear, "and you shall not understand.

"And seeing, you will see and not perceive. "For the hearts of this people have grown dull." That word there, grown dull, doesn't mean, hearts are dull right when they're born. Well, of course, they're sin and babies when they're born, but that's what I'm saying.

I'm saying the heart can grow dull. The heart that was once open, if it keeps rejecting and keeps closing its ears off and keeps closing the work of the Holy Spirit, can grow dull, and they get to a point and their heart has grown dull and hard, and they no longer hear the word of God and receive it. We see this a lot when you talk to somebody.

They're listening, they're drawn in, they're trying to understand, but then they keep, as weeks go by and the months go by, and they get harder and harder to the things of God. And I don't know if you know that or not, but our heart either becomes pliable and soft and broken and open to the things of God, or duller and duller and duller, if that's a word, duller. I don't know, you can tell me after the service.

But it becomes dull week in and week out, and that's what Jesus referred to as a hard heart. It grows that way, it grows dull. "Their ears are hard of hearing, "and their eyes they have closed, "lest they should see with their eyes "and hear with their ears, "lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, "so that I should heal them." Isn't that interesting? Jesus says, if you turn to me, I will heal.

If you turn to me, I will heal your sins, maybe physical things sometimes, but if we turn to him, he will heal, he will deliver, he will set free. Verse 16, but blessed are your eyes, for they see, he's talking to his disciples, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, "and your ears, for they hear. "For assuredly, I say to you, "that many prophets and righteous men "desire to see what you see and did not see it, "and to hear what you hear and did not hear it." And he's reminding them that he is, Jesus is what has been foretold for many years, thousands of years in many cases.

Moses, Joshua, all these people, Samuel, David, they wanted to see what these disciples were actually seeing. Could you imagine being there with Jesus and seeing these things unfold? And he's saying, you are blessed because you see these things. Now, earlier on when he said, why is it given to them to know the mysteries of God, the mysteries of things? Really, all that is is spiritual things.

Why is it being given to the disciples to understand the mysteries of God? A mystery is something that was hidden and now it's revealed. Why do they get to know and not these other guys? Because they had ears to hear. That makes all the difference in the world.

They had ears to hear. This is why the Bible comes alive for some people. It's not the seed, it's the soil.

In other words, this, to many people, I hear it a lot and so do you, this is boring, it's dead, I don't even know where to start, I don't even know what they're talking about, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It's not this, it's the soil. It's the soil.

Every day you should say, Lord, speak to me through your word today. Even if I'm in Numbers, even if I'm in Leviticus. I mean, I was just in Numbers this week talking about the doctrine of Balaam and how he led the children of Israel astray by sexual immorality and the pull of that in our culture today.

Great warnings right there, and then I'm in Isaiah where it's talking about I will judge the nations, but then I will come and I will be the rescuer, I will be the redeemer, and it made me think again of Christ coming and rescuing us in every situation, and then I found myself in Matthew and allowing the word of God to speak to you. If you have ears to hear, you will hear, but if you go into it as some dry, dead, legalistic book that you're gonna try to just get a few nuggets out of like a Tony Evans motivational seminar, it's not gonna work. It wasn't designed to do that.

It's designed to unlock the mysteries of God. And I've told you before, maybe a few years ago now, but one of our family members was on all kinds of medication. She spent hours at night just reading Isaiah, and God broke her and broke her and broke her, weeping, giving up that medication.

Why? Because she had ears to hear. When you get to a point, say, Lord, I'm so desperate. I need to hear from you.

If you seek me with all of your heart, you will find me. The problem is many people are not that desperate. This is a shoot you straight sermon.

We are not that desperate to hear from God. How do I know? You give God tomorrow as much time as you're giving the Super Bowl. Three hours, are you crazy? I rest my case.

Exactly, exactly. Well, that's a big game, I know, but let's be real. How much time do we honestly give God in the morning or in the evening, that time of building that relationship? Who has ears to hear, let them hear.

If not, our heart grows dull. We get a little verse text to our phone or a little Bible app. Oh, isn't that a wonderful verse for the day? And that's good, it can help.

It can steer us in the right direction. But if you're relying on that as your arsenal to come up against the onslaught of the enemy, you will lose every time. So this is spiritual war.

This is warfare where the Christian spends time with God. They open up the ears of their understanding that their eyes may be open up to what God is doing. And that takes time.

This is not microwave Christianity. It's put the oven on 425 and cook for 60 minutes. That's what opens up the heart.

And I can only say these things because it happens to me. You think the Bible comes alive for me every morning and I just can't wait to get out of bed and just running through. I know it's challenging many times.

But as you press in, as you seek and as you push in and say, Lord, my ears don't want to, but I want to. Give me ears to hear. And as you press in and put on worship and the prayer, God begins to speak to you in so many different ways.

Like I said before, where do you think these sermons come from? That time. God's putting all of this into my heart during that time. He'll do the same for you.

You should have journal, a journal next to your, or notes in your Bible where God's speaking to you and showing you things. If not, it could be possible that the heart has grown dull or it's never been opened. You have to, I mean, you have to ask yourself if the Bible is boring, if it's dead, if it's dull, what's the problem? It's not with the seed.

It's the soil. The seed will succeed. The seed will succeed.

If you put it in the right soil, the right heart, it will succeed. It has nothing to do with the seed. It has everything to do with the soil of our heart.

He reminded them of Isaiah's prophecy. The reason is because God's word does not return void. For the heart of this people have grown dull.

Their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes have closed. This is a very bad spot to live. Do you know a lot of people live in this spot? Well, how do we know? Well, let's take the test.

Here is the fruit of good soil. Is there love in your life continually? I mean, there's ups and downs, but is there love in your life? Is there peace? Is there long suffering? Is there kindness? Is there goodness? Is there faithfulness? Is there gentleness? Is there self-control? Is that the soil? Or the fruit of a hard heart, anger, your ability, confusion, impatience, hostility, unfaithfulness, and a lack of self-control. All you have to do to find out about a hard heart is to reverse the fruit of the Spirit.

What's the other side of the fruit of the Spirit? Love, joy, peace, or anger, hostility, hatred. That's the works of the flesh. And that's one way I can tell my heart's not going, is growing dull, and I need to put in the right soil, is what's coming out.

But most of us have tons of excuses. Well, this is why it's hard, and this is why this, and this is why I'm going through this. And we have to remove these excuses because we're out of God's will.

A hard heart is not in God's will. A heart, you will not get direction from God and have a hard heart at the same time. That's why Jesus said, you stiff-necked people, you hard-hearted, always resisting the work of the Holy Spirit, always resisting the call of God to repentance, you're resisting Him, how? By a hard heart, by not having pliable soil there.

And then he goes on to explain, therefore, hear the parable of the sower. Now he's going to explain it. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, so basically, this is going out, whether it's preaching, whether it's teaching, whether it's personal conversations, whether it's on email, whether it's on Facebook, the word of God is going out.

This is the seed. But here's the soil it hits. When anyone hears the word and does not understand it, basically doubt, questioning a lot of things, then the wicked one comes in and snatches away what was sown in his heart.

This is he who received the seed by the wayside. But, let me back up again, verse 19. When anyone hears the word of God and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart.

This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. Yet he has no root in himself but endures only for a while.

In other words, this person you can imagine, the person who hears the word of God and receives in joy because of all the benefits. All the benefits of Christianity, that's wonderful. Wealthy, healthy, rich, benefits, Jesus, yeah.

You know, we receive it with joy, that sounds so good, but we endure only for a while because when tribulation or persecution come, that's the best test of faith you will ever have. The best test of your faith is what do you do when tribulation comes? What do you do when you're persecuted for your faith? What do you do when life is not going the way it's supposed to? What do you do when you leave it to beaver and say, my family doesn't look like that. I'm going through hell, what's going on, God? That's what tests the faith.

That's what the Bible called the furnace of affliction. That brings out the dross, that brings out the impurities. A faith that has not been tested cannot be trusted.

I believe it was Martin Luther who said that. So always remember that your faith will go through things. Your faith has to stand trial.

That's how you build it. It's like at the gym, right? This doesn't feel good, but it's building something. Faith, when I go through things, it doesn't feel good, but it's building something.

And he's saying, if you don't have that, you will fall away. You will stumble. Verse 22, now he who receives seed among the thorns is he who hears the word and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and he becomes unfruitful.

But he who received the seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces, some a hundredfold, some 60, some 30. And you have to realize something on this cares of this world or trials and tribulations. When we follow Christ, we have chosen sides.

When you become a Christian, you've chosen the side of light and the side of darkness does not like him. And that's how he comes in with doubt, with the cares of this life, with tribulation. He uses these fiery darts of the enemy to draw us away from Christ.

And I don't know if you guys caught this this week, but I'm trying to remember his name. Philip DeCourcy on the radio was quoting, what was her name? Well, it'll come to me in a little bit, but anyway, he was quoting a Bible teacher, Jill something. No help here? You guys don't know? Briscoe, there you go.

That was easy. So he was quoting Jill Briscoe. I knew I should have wrote this down.

And she was back when 9-11 happened, I think she was in Europe or somewhere. And it was, I mean, the airlines were, everybody's in holding pattern and everybody's worried. And she sat down next to this girl who was in the army and she was panicking.

And Jill began to minister to her, talk to her. And the girl said, I didn't join the army to go to war. And her point, what did you do? What did you join the army for? A good education? And I think that's what sometimes Christians, I didn't join this to go to war.

I didn't, this is not what I signed up for. Well, it's what the Bible says happens, that the faith has to stand trial that we are in war. You don't choose it, it chooses you.

There's nothing we can do about it. We are on the, when we're on the side of light, the side of darkness will do whatever it can to knock us off course. So the first thing he talks about there is wayside.

Actually, I better write Jill Briscoe down. Benefits of the first service. The wayside.

Okay, remember the seed falls in the wayside and the enemy quickly comes and snatches it away. Instead of seeking God, here's what happens. Instead of seeking God in their confusion, they allow doubt to drive them away.

And doubt is a stronghold of the enemy. And I'll just be up front with you, as I always am. Doubt, I believe, plays into a lot of our minds.

You too, Shane? No, we have. And now I've got to get right back on track. Doubt comes in.

And just this week, I ran into a guy and he recognized me from somewhere. And I said, oh, do you go, and when I saw his shirt, it said something about atheism. He goes, yeah, I'm an atheist.

I used to believe what you believe. And I went to desert Christian school, but now I'm an atheist. And, you know, and I said, okay, well, how did you come to that conclusion? He said, well, I studied the Bible and kind of contradictions, a lot of doubt, and it's not, can't be true.

So I'm, he said, I'm an atheist now, and that's what I feel okay with. And, you know, but whatever he read of mine or something, he said, but you really got me thinking. So I think that's a good thing.

But did you hear it? When I was listening, he said, but I had some doubts. What do you do with those doubts? God says, bring your doubts to me. Bring your questions to me.

Is the God, as we sang, that holds the stars in the palm of his hands, it created the universe, it sustains life? I think he can handle a few doubts. And it's okay to have doubts because we are finite people, meaning we're not perfect. We don't have all knowledge.

God is infinite. He is all knowledge, all powerful. And Lord, I don't know how this works.

I have some doubts in this area. Can you help me? And you use that as an anchor to drive your faith even deeper. So I used to take my doubts about the Bible, and then I'd read, oh, that's how we got our Bible.

It wasn't just a whole bunch of guys said, oh, let's believe this, let's believe this. It was written over the 1500 years by many different authors on three different continents. And it stands the test of time, archeologically, prophetically, scientifically, historically.

Look at all the comparatives there. Look at what it, just look at it. Come test me.

And you bring your doubts to God. So that's what happens on this soil. As many people hear the word of God, well, that sounds interesting.

Okay, I'm, but then doubt comes in and the enemy quickly comes and does his quickest work there. And the real thing that people get hung up on is, well, how do you know that's true? When I like to ask, well, how do you know it's not? How do you know it's not? You're so convinced it's not. How do you know? Well, it can't, well, let's test it.

God says, test it, bring it to me. Bring your doubts to me. Actually, the more I started to study it, the more I fell in love with what God has done.

And there's, you know, if there's an inconsistency here or this, or you have questions, let's look at it. You know, people say, what about dinosaurs? What about the earth, billions of years old? Some people only say 6,000 years. What about, you know, what about all this? There's answers to some of those questions.

And sometimes there aren't answers. Is the earth 6 billion years old or 6,000 years old? Everybody, you know, you read this guy, he makes a good case. You read this guy, he makes a good case.

The Bible sounds pretty literal. You know, and then we get all worked up about it. Oh, it can't be true.

Was it possible that maybe God hasn't revealed that much information? If God created the earth, is it gonna look a second old or would it look old? When God created Adam, did he look a second old? Or did he look 30 years old? I mean, you know, his ways are so much higher than our ways. And there's a big theory, you know, Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 with the Spirit of God hovering over the deep of the earth. There's a gap theory there.

Could that have been thousands of years or millions of years? Sure, God could have done whatever he wanted. Are they literal days? I believe so. Creation, literal day one, literal day two, literal day three.

Yeah, but how were the plants created without the sun? Well, God gave life to the plants. The sun brings the photosynthesis and energizes the plant later. How do you know he couldn't do that? I mean, we allow doubt to creep in, but if we study things and we look to good sources, a lot of those doubts can be answered.

Many, many doubts. One thing I was telling a Mormon a while back is all these cities and kingdoms and fights and battles in the Book of Mormon, you can't find anything. You can't find any of the cities.

You can't find any of the battlefields. You can't find any of the weapons. You can't find anything.

It's like it's a made up story, nothing. But here you can still go to Israel. You can still see the tomb of this person.

You can still see archeological discoveries of this king and these coins and everything validates. It's a true story. The walls of Jericho, the Sumerian desert there in Sumeria and all these things are there to see.

It confirms it. And archeological discoveries from the Dead Sea Scrolls and many different things that they're finding and say, oh, this confirms the Bible. Yeah, it does.

So don't allow doubt to creep in there because it will. It's okay to doubt. You don't have to go, I'm not doubting.

If I just say that a thousand times a day, every day. No, say, Lord, I'm doubting in this area. Lord, I'm doubting.

Would you help me here? Time of confession. I had a hard time this morning in numbers. You know, it talks about, they capture these people and says, go wipe out the whole village.

Women and children, Lord, I cannot put my hand around this. I don't understand. I don't understand.

So do I say, well, because I don't understand, this must not be true. See, you can go anywhere with that doubt. There's a lot of things in the Bible I don't like that it records.

Hell. Eternal separation from God for a week or a year. Eternity.

Why? Well, that doesn't make a lot of sense. That's a pretty big punishment. But then as you start to read on the subject, understand that God can't dwell with sin.

So he gives us, he brings Christ. Christ is the provision to bridge that gap. He says, here, I've given you, I've given you the eternal life.

You need to take it. We say, no, I don't want to. Whose fault is it? So you gotta be very careful not to allow doubt to come in, especially when life gets difficult and life gets challenging.

That's when doubt really comes up. God, did you really say? I just lost my job. I just got this news and now, are you kidding me? God said, I never said you'd avoid the storm.

Do you recall that I said I would take you through the storm? So doubt is, I think it's a stronghold of the enemy. He gets a foothold. We talked about that before.

He puts a foot in the door. My kids like to do this. You know, if they're mad at me, they're gonna slam the door and say, no, you're not.

My foot's right there, you're not. Sorry, now I can just open the door. Shane, that happens at your house? I thought they were little angels that just behaved all the time.

I wish. But that's what the enemy does with doubt. And then he moves right into the stony places.

Roots go deep to anchor a tree. Faith must go deep to anchor the Christian. Tribulation and persecution resemble the wind blowing something down that is not anchored.

It's funny, you can take the same size palm tree, one in the dirt, one sitting in the bucket, and guess what happens to that tree after a windy day, every time? Go by nursery places, they have, the trees fall over, there's no roots. Same size tree. So he's saying, a person's faith is little.

They don't invest in God, they're not in his word. They're into the things of the world. They have no root.

And roots are really only tested or needed when the adversity comes. That's why there's roots holding those trees so they can bend, it's the adversity. So many people hear the word, but it doesn't go deep.

It's superficial, they don't do anything to foster it or build it. As I've often said, if you're not building your faith, your faith is declining. This is an interesting thing with faith.

Our faith, mine included, is either being built up daily or it's being hurt. It's being, I don't know what the right word there would be, but it's the opposite of being built up. It's not destroyed, but it's being withered away.

It's this idea of my faith is faltering. That's why Jesus said, Peter, I pray that your faith fail thee not. So it's either being built up or it's faltering.

And then he went right into the thorns. I could preach a whole sermon on this one, the thorns. The cares of this world pull us away.

And what this is, it's being so ingrained in the culture that we are unproductive. We no longer resemble the character of Christ who used to capture our attention. And this is where everybody has to be aware.

The cares of this life. Entertainment, too much entertainment. Now, I know the big game's tomorrow.

I'm not gonna beat anybody up, but I'm gonna say this. I've seen a lot of Christians get so caught up in sports that they don't have time for God. They're so worried about who's winning, who's this, this, this.

Their whole life is about that cares of this world. And that pulls them away. Entertainment, money, pleasure, these cares of the world, the good God-given things, when perverted or in abundance, begin to pull us away from God.

God calls us to do something. I believe that God calls the believers to do something great, but the success of the call is determined by staying on the path. God has a calling on your life.

As a believer, I believe God has called you, he's gifted you, wants us to do certain things. Not just me who has a call. He's created us to do something.

But when we get off that path, when we remove ourselves from that soil where we can flourish, that's called what I call prone to wander, the wander within. I preached on that about six months ago. And that's what the cares of the life do.

They pull, it's the wander within. The old famous hymn, right? Lord, prone to wander. My soul is prone to wander.

I feel it. Lord, help me. And there's this side of me that wants to follow God, and there's this side of me that wants to wander.

And that's what the cares of this world do. They just, come on. Comfort and convenience and pleasure.

And again, I believe in those things in moderation, but they can pull us away from God. Are you being infected by the world? As we're talking about this point on cares of this world, are you being infected by the world? Like any infection, it can destroy the body, and in this case, the soul. When we are infected, we infect others.

Parents, think about this. What influences are you allowing into your home? Or fathers, or mothers, what are you allowing into your homes, into the mind of your children? What are you allowing into your own minds? Are you being infected by the world, or are you affecting the world? Are you making a difference, or is it making a difference in your heart? That's a very healthy question to ask. I wonder if we could, and you know, if God could see our hearts right now, how many of us are being infected by the world? Like what I just talked about, all the news, all the media, all this, all this, all this.

We're being infected by the world. And what happens, and Paul talked about in Romans, be not conformed to this world like a little lump of clay, be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So whether we like it or not, we are being conformed to the things of this world if we don't fight against that, if we don't rally against that.

The cares of this world destroy our relationship with Christ and genuine fellowship with others. And I'm using these words on purpose, destroy. You might say, oh man, Shane, you're being so dramatic.

Well no, that's what the cares of this life do. I'd love to be more dramatic. I would love to tell you about all the lives of young adults and teenagers that have been thrown down the garbage because of the cares of this life.

I would love to tell you about all the marriages that have been destroyed because of the cares of this life. I would love to tell you about all the people who are not walking in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit because of the cares of this life. It's that destructive.

It'll pull you away from God and me. How do I know? Oh, because it's a struggle for me too. The cares of this life are a constant pull.

It's like we jump in this river and we're all constantly swimming upstream. You start to get pretty tired. That's why I say, Lord, take over.

You do this in the power of the Holy Spirit. You do this. I'm surrendering this to you.

The cares of the world destroy our prayer life. A carnal Christian, we can say that because Paul said it, a carnal Christian does not pray, really pray and seek the heart of God. A deep prayer life exposes facades

and crushes hypocrisy.

Think about that. If somebody's being drawn away by the cares of this life, they do not want to spend more than five minutes in prayer. Why? Because it's heart-searching.

We can't be drawn away by the cares of this world and then love to spend time in God's presence. What are the others prevailing? Because if I'm spending a lot of time in God's presence, I'm in his word and worship, then the cares of this world have no hold on me. But if I'm investing in the cares of this world, I've drifted.

And to be honest with you, that's the point of many of these sermons is to get you back on course and to get us back focused in the right direction. The cares of this life also destroy spiritual power. What do I mean by that? I mean that as believers, we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

And when you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you can quench and you can grieve the Spirit and you have known nothing about the Spirit-filled life. Or you can be empowered by the Spirit. When you go places, you witness.

When you go places, you minister. God's word, like I've said before, comes alive. You want to be part of fellowship.

You want to be part of church. You're being filled with God's directing you. He's giving you wisdom in a situation.

You're speaking things into other people's life. You can see God blessing your life all by this empowerment, this endowment, the filling of the Holy Spirit. And the cares of this world and the Holy Spirit are not friends.

Like I've said before, the Holy Spirit will say, okay, you want it, you got it. There you go. And the cares of this life.

Trust me, this is one point that I've seen so many people, myself included, it can wreak havoc on your life because it becomes a form of idolatry. Idolatry is just putting something in the spot of where God should be. And then that becomes our idol.

What I drive, where I live, where I work. We begin to worship these, oh yeah, I got God right here. Yeah, he's right there.

But I put all these other things first. And here's a good test to know if that's the problem. You're convicted right now.

You're convicted right now. So I'm not coming next Saturday. But that's a good sign because conviction is that wonderful gift that we've talked about before that God uses to say that's not right.

That's something in your life you need to change. When Jesus said that we are the salt and the light of the earth, he was saying that we should have a preserving and cleansing effect on the culture. We should bring a purifying aspect to all areas of life.

Light dispels darkness, it does not cater to it. So when Jesus said we are the salt and the light, are we? Are we? I mean, I often tell people this. What kind of difference are you making in the workplace? What

kind of difference are you making at home? Does your home resemble something you'll see on reality TV or something we see in the Bible? Now we go through phases, right? My home sometimes looks like something you see on reality TV when the kids are having meltdowns, they haven't eaten, they're tired, you know.

It's like, what is this? It's chaos. But overall, overall, we have to ask ourselves, am I affecting the culture? When I go somewhere, am I affecting the culture? That's why I told you guys last week, I actually ended up doing, I took a little league baseball team, I'm coaching. Don't ask me why.

But I wanna make a difference in those lives. Don't tell them that, they think we're playing baseball. But in the lives of the kids and in the parents, and you're already dealing with stuff, right? In the next couple weeks, complaints, this, why is it my kid get to play, what about this, what about, am I gonna make a difference in the culture? Where you work, your friendships.

And you guys think I'm joking, but Facebook reveals a lot. What are you liking, what are you posting? It reveals our heart. I mean, I'll see so many Christians in the title on Facebook where you look at the stuff like, what in the world is this? Lady Gaga's new video.

Oh, that's a great thing to post up there. I mean, it's like, what are we doing? The cares of this life have drawn you away. And God says, you will not be productive.

See, a Christian can exist, but they won't be productive. They can exist, but they won't be fruitful. They can exist, but they'll be depressed.

Is there anything more miserable than a miserable Christian? They get up in the morning, the joy of the Lord has left. They go to bed, the joy of the Lord has left. They go through life, there's no joy, there's no peace.

They argue just like everybody else. There's no difference, there's no distinction, why? Often because of the cares of this life pull us away. And the purpose of this sermon is not to upset, it's to foster repentance and a deeper walk with God.

Listen, guys, if you wanna know what I'm really after, this is what I'm really after. To get people to have a deeper walk with God because it's life-altering, it's life-changing. If I can get the majority of people, West Side Christian Fellowship, to start seeking God with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their strength, with all their mind, the joy that will come out of this place, the joy that you would see in your own lives, that's my goal.

That's why I stir and convict, not to upset, it's to rally change in your heart. It's a good point to mention this again. People rarely change unless they're convicted.

They rarely change unless they're given a wake-up call. They rarely change. Why? Because we like to go this direction and then God says, oh, go back this way.

Without that this way, it wouldn't happen. We'll just keep down that course. That's a loving father.

Doesn't Hebrew talks about those he loves, he disciplines? He scourges? As his own, he brings them back to a place of right relationship with him. But on this point, I want to talk briefly about the word grace that we use a lot. And the reason I want to bring this up is when I talk about some of these things about

everything we just talked about for the last 20 minutes, somebody might say, well, what about grace, Shane? What about the grace of God? And that's true.

But grace doesn't relieve us of responsibility. We now live under a higher standard when grace governs our decisions. And the grace of God does not mean we can just go live however we want.

Because of the grace of God, I want to live as Christ calls me to live. They work together. And there's something out there now, you'll see if you go on a lot of different websites.

I think the Christian Post had it this week and Christianity Today, Charisma website. It's something called hyper grace. Hyper grace.

And this term, and I think some Christians are following into this and I want to talk about it for a minute. The term hyper grace has been used to describe a new wave of teaching that emphasizes the grace of God to the exclusion of other vital teachings such as repentance and confession of sin. Hyper grace teachers maintain that all sin, past, present, and future has already been forgiven.

Which is true, right? But so there's no need for a believer to ever confess it or repent. The conclusion of hyper grace teaching is that we are not bound by Jesus' teaching, even as we are not under the law. That believers are not responsible for their sin.

And that anyone who disagrees with them is legalistic. In short, hyper grace teachers pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality. So if it's all about grace, all about grace, don't talk about all those other things, Shane.

It's all about grace, it's hyper grace. And one of the articles was written by Dr. Brown. And he titled his article, Some Honest Questions for Joseph Prince.

And I'm not here putting down people or not, I'm just saying what the article said. I think Joseph Prince would fall under teaching something like this, doesn't mean they're false teachers necessarily, but they embrace something that they're not gonna talk about the difficult things, it's all about God's grace. So he asks these questions to Joseph Prince and he hasn't got an answer back yet, but it fits in perfectly.

He asks this question, are there spiritual benefits that come through obeying God's commands and then spiritual losses that come from ignoring them? Yes, yes, but they say no. We're all on equal playing field. The New Testament writers often exhort us to live in ways that please the Lord.

Does that mean that it's possible for us to displease the Lord? Yes, they say no. Because it's hyper grace, it's all about grace and forgiveness, we don't have to worry about all this other stuff. We agree that God relates to us as beloved children, but is he always pleased with us? And since Paul urges us not to grieve the Spirit, does that mean that we can't in fact grieve the Spirit? Yes, we can.

They say no, we can't. We agree that the Holy Spirit never condemns us for our sins as believers, but does he ever make us uncomfortable when we sin? Oh, yes, he does. Personal witness on that one.

To me, this is a very strong loving act of the Father, not wanting us to get comfortable doing things that could destroy our lives. Isn't that something to be embraced? And doesn't that drive us to the cross rather than away from it? But the reason, not to excuse the hyper grace camp, but the reason they do it is they want to avoid the extreme where people constantly feel guilty and beat up and condemned. There are

churches that do that.

There are people you just guilt, you never live, you're just guilty, guilty, and they forget about grace and forgiveness. But as with many other issues, they often go the polar opposite. And in an attempt to correct that, they should have just stopped here instead of going all the way here, and then now we don't need to talk about obedience to God.

We don't need to talk about repentance. We don't need to talk because it's already been done. It's all about grace now.

Well, there's a lot of scriptures then you'll have to throw out. And I look, I thought of this, look at it this way. There's a man who has two sons.

One son gets up in the morning, takes the trash out on his way to work, even does the dishes, can you believe that? You know, he's got a good job, doesn't make a lot of money, but he works hard. The other son gets up around 11 o'clock, doing Lord knows what since three in the morning, makes a mess out of the whole kitchen, his mom's upset, doesn't do anything, just a deadbeat, lazy son. Okay, both of the sons of the father, the father says, I love you both, son, but what's the difference? I'm not pleased with how you're conducting yourself.

This one says, dad, can I have the car keys to the car? Sure, here you go. This one says, nope, you're gonna go buy a six pack. You're gonna destroy, you see, there's consequences.

So the hyper grace would say, nope, it's all the same. But there's a distinction there. The word of God says, listen, we've gotta do some things, not quench the spirit, not greed the spirit, not continue in sin.

So on the area, just be very careful because you don't wanna get caught up on it's all about grace without understanding what grace really involves. To me, grace is unmerited favor. Because of the grace of God, we are saved.

He sent his only son to die on a cross. That is sheer mercy and grace. And because of that relationship now, I wanna live to please my father.

And how do we please the father? By obeying his word. But if you say, don't obey his word, that's legalistic, then where are you going with this? I think the real reason is it upsets people. Did you know that? Difficult truths upset people.

The things that they really need to hear are the things they don't want to hear. And that's why we have to share the whole counsel of God's word. So I'll close with this.

Many people at this stage might think, hey, Shane, I'm hopeless, I've drifted too far. I mean, not only have the cares of the world got me, doubt has got me, my faith is not anchored. You just beat me up.

No, I didn't. Let this be an encouragement. God does not let our relationship with him hinge on measuring up or following rules.

He actually, the Bible talks repeatedly about return to me and I will return to you. Return to me and I will return to you. Here's the good news about the good soil.

It's always available. Remember the story I told about the watermelons, right? If you have one of those seeds on the concrete, it's not going anywhere. But if you pick up that seed and you go plant it in the dirt, you change the environment, you will change the growth.

Life will come to that now instead of death. That's all you have to do. That's why I'm trying to motivate.

You just have to plant the seed in the right soil. Oh, that's gonna take months. No, no, no, it takes one thing.

Lord, I've been wrong. I'm sorry, I'm repenting. Lord, would you bring the joy of your salvation back to me? I've been drifting away in these areas.

Lord, I'm coming back to you tonight. That's good soil. It's back, it's back, now it's growing.

That's how encouraging this is. You can put it right back into that soil and get back on track and back going in the right direction and there's no joy like the joy of returning to God. There's no joy that matches that other than the joy of salvation.

But when you drift away and you come back to God, that's powerful. When you put that seed back in a good soil, that's when I see people smiling, Shane, you're not gonna believe my week. I've been living in the word of God.

I've got worship on. My life's been changed and transformed. Oh, I met God again in a powerful way.

What happened? The seed? No, the seed's always been there. It's the soil. It's the soil.

The soil determines spiritual growth. Or some of you might be saying, I'm planting but nothing is happening. Are you frustrated? Are you burnt out? I'm planting.

Have you ever done that? I planted years ago but nothing's happening. Well, two things. Number one, you may have contaminated soil.

You might have planted a seed in contaminated soil. There's a place in construction where we used to have all of our equipment, heavy equipment, backhoes and diesel trucks and all that. And you couldn't get much to grow back there where you parked them.

Why? Because it's probably two inches thick worth of, don't tell Kalosha, but the diesel and oil and the dirt was just contaminated. Nothing, I mean, you could dig a little hole and plant whatever, nothing's gonna grow there because it's contaminated soil. That's the point of the sermon is to look at your life.

Is the soil contaminated? Does that seed need to be moved out into a soil that now where it can grow and flourish and have life? Maybe so. Or this could be happening too. If you've planted but nothing is happening, God is working behind the scenes on your character.

He's working on your character. And something we know in construction that you know if you've worked in construction is the higher the building, the deeper the foundation. So as God is moving and deepening and deepening, it's so you can do something that he's called you to do.

Your character has to withstand the weight of what he's called you to do. You guys think I'm joking, but I'm not. If he would have called me to do this 10 years ago, I would have failed miserably, would have been

ugly.

Why? He says, you're not ready yet, you're not ready. Some pastors get to start at 20, you got to start at 40. Why? Because it took me that long.

Building and building and building. And there's something interesting, I'm sure you've heard of this before. But if you plant like a little green vine, plant a little seed from the green vine, and the green vine will come up immediately, probably months after a little bit of water and soil and moisture, and it'll begin to blanket the ground.

But if you take a bamboo seed and you plant that seed and you water and you water and you water, you won't see anything for a year or two or three or four. But on the fifth year, they said it grows 90 feet in five weeks. Google it, this is one thing you Google and you trust it.

But Chinese bamboo, just research. But it's nothing, what's happening? I'm watering this dirt, nothing's happening. What a waste of time.

Oh no, no, no, step back, because here it comes. Because when God says, okay, now you're ready, now nothing can hold you down. Nothing can hold you back.

He says, all those years of weeping, all those years of travail, all those years of worship, all those times in the world, they were not unfruitful. You just couldn't see the foundation that's being built. Because we want immediate gratification.

We want microwave Christianity. God says, no, hold on or we'll destroy you. I like what Tony Evans said, many want a skyscraper destiny built on a chicken coop foundation.

Is that true? Lord, I want that skyscraper destiny, but I want a chicken coop foundation. So take heart, the word of God will not return void. You're planting and you're watering.

It will grow the deeper the foundation, the stronger the structure. Sometimes I think we should thank God or thank you that you're taking this long. Thank you that you're working on my heart.

Thank you that you're working in this area. Thank you that you're building my marriage. Thank you that you're building my kids into this.

I know, thank you for building it, because I know that it's gonna take that type of character to weather the storms that are coming. And if you think storms aren't coming to this nation, you better wake up and read the newspaper. I mean, once in a while it's okay.

Just don't do it every day. I mean, even I get negative. Go on the news like, what in the world is it coming to? Because you've gotta weather those storms.

So the deeper the foundation, the stronger the structure. That's why I like the song they sang, Christ alone, our cornerstone, through this storm, he is Lord of all. And ultimately it comes to this, what or who are you anchored in?

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