

DAYMARK

PASTORAL COUNSELING

For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others. 2 Corinthians 5:19

2002

SPRING

THE FAST PACE

of SLOW GROWTH

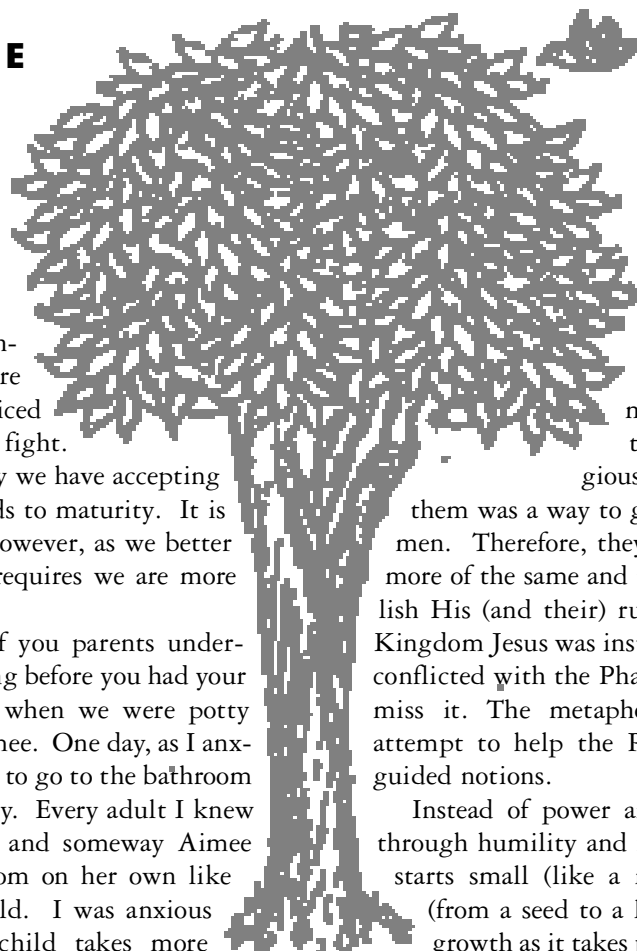
By Gordon Bals

As I have worked with others to help them "mature in Christ" I have noticed common battles that we all fight. One such battle is the difficulty we have accepting the nature of the path that leads to maturity. It is not always an easy journey. However, as we better understand what the journey requires we are more apt to be at rest along the way.

For instance, how many of you parents understood the process of child rearing before you had your first child? I can remember when we were potty training our first daughter, Aimee. One day, as I anxiously fretted over her inability to go to the bathroom like an adult, I had an epiphany. Every adult I knew was potty trained. Somehow and somehow Aimee would learn to go the bathroom on her own like every other person in the world. I was anxious about nothing. Raising a child takes more patience than I thought it would. Now that I more fully comprehend the terrain of child rearing I am more relaxed as a parent.

This same thing is true about our growth as Christians. As we understand the nature of the process it helps us to rest along the way. Once, Jesus addressed the nature of Kingdom Growth when he gave the Pharisees a couple of metaphors to help them understand why they were missing the Kingdom. He said, "What is the Kingdom of God like? How can I illustrate it? It is like a tiny mustard seed planted in a garden; it grows and becomes a tree, and the birds come and find shelter among its branches." He also asked, "What else is the Kingdom of God like?" It is like yeast used by a woman making bread. Even though she used a large amount of flour, the yeast permeated every part of the dough" (Luke 13:18-21, NLT).

Jesus gives these metaphors right after healing a



"The Kingdom of God grows like a tiny mustard seed into a large tree

woman on the Sabbath. Performing that act enraged the leaders of the synagogue. The metaphors were given to continue the process of exposing the religious leaders' pride. Religion for

them was a way to gain power and be recognized by men. Therefore, they expected the Messiah to bring more of the same and to quickly and powerfully establish His (and their) rule on earth. The fact that the Kingdom Jesus was instituting was not going to do this conflicted with the Pharisees' goals and caused them to miss it. The metaphors Jesus gave them were an attempt to help the Pharisees understand their misguided notions.

Instead of power and control the kingdom grows through humility and faith. Kingdom Growth always starts small (like a mustard seed), it grows slowly (from a seed to a large tree) and you can't see the growth as it takes place (like yeast in bread). At any moment, as we are hoping for kingdom growth, what we actually have will seem too small. When Jesus said the kingdom of God grows like "a tiny mustard seed" he was using a popular colloquialism that his listeners would understand. "As small as a mustard seed" meant as small as possible. There could be nothing smaller. Although we long to have a "whole tree" of patience, it will never start with more than a mustard seed. We don't have to be surprised when we are aiming towards something grand and in the moment we don't have much to work with. In fact, the enemy will whisper to you sentences like, "You fool! Do you think you will ever develop real patience - that little ounce of hope won't get you anywhere"? The truth is that the little mustard seed of hope is all that is needed.

Every person that has ended up becoming more and more like Christ started each new part of the journey



SPECIAL

ANNOUNCEMENT

I want to welcome our new readers this quarter.

We had many people sign up to receive the newsletter at the Allure of Hope Seminar and the men's weekend at Altadena Valley Presbyterian Church. Welcome! This really feels like a "news letter" because there is some exciting news we want to communicate. Until recently, I (Gordon) never considered doing Daymark full-time (more than half of my present salary comes from being an assistant pastor at Shades Valley Community Church) because I was afraid that most of the extra time would be taken up by raising funds for the ministry. Well, in the first four years of our existence we have "raised" \$70,000 through the generosity of many of you who read the newsletter. To my surprise, this has happened without active "fund raising" and has provided impetus for me to consider going full time.

In addition to that realization, the Lord has specifically aroused me to consider doing Daymark full-time. This past year I was contacted about some job possibilities that forced me to consider my future and helped me to come to some conclusions. Dawn and I like Birmingham and we want to stay. I see my gifts bearing fruit in the areas of counseling and teaching. I want to see Daymark increase its involvement with the churches we are already supporting. Julie and I share a similar calling and compliment one another well. I bet by now you get the idea. I desire to and feel led by the Lord to do Daymark full-time. This decision comes with equal amounts of excitement, fear, and loss. I have real excitement over the new possibilities, fear from making a significant change and loss over leaving staff at Shades Valley Community Church. Together with the Daymark board and Shades Valley Community Church, I will work out a transition period that I expect to be completed by August or September. To make the transition in time we need several things to happen:

• **Securing Office Space:** *We need office space that provides two separate offices (one for counseling and one for working) and a small waiting area. If you are aware of this type of space that someone might donate or that is listed at a reasonable rate please let us know.*

• **Obtaining Office Equipment & Furniture:** *We need a computer, Quickbooks and Adobe PageMaker software, desk, credenza, bookshelves and chairs or a couch for counseling. If you have any of these items and would like to donate them or would like to give financially so we could purchase them that would be a huge help.*

• **Increased Giving:** *This will be to cover Gordon's salary loss from the church, medical insurance for his family and increased overhead expenses. Gordon will be able to do more counseling which will increase income. However, we will still need an additional \$2,500 a month which is a big jump from our present level of contributions. We will need new monthly, quarterly and one-time gifts over the long haul to support such a change. In addition we will need some special one-time gifts over the next several months to help us make the transition. We*

simply ask you to pray and consider whether you can help with our needs. We need to begin receiving funds in June or July or as soon as possible so we will be prepared for the move in August or September. In our first four years, financial gifts have constituted a little less than half of our income and we plan to maintain this in our new budget. We are committed to maintaining a sliding scale in keeping with our mission that we would "make pastoral counseling services accessible." It is a visible picture of grace and in keeping with the New Testament concept that ministry to someone should not be based on their ability to pay for it. The letter we recently received from a former client (found on page 4) gives a picture of why we have chosen to carry out our mission in the form of a non-profit ministry and how your gifts help to support us in that mission.

• **Prayer Team:** *For a while we have wanted to put together a group of people who would be faithful to pray for all aspects of the ministry and the impending change has given us the impetus to get this going. To be on the team you must have access to email because we will use that medium to communicate our needs.*

To assist you in responding to the above needs we have enclosed a reply card and envelope. Please indicate your desire to help on that card and return it to us in the envelope provided. We genuinely appreciate your willingness to consider supporting us in any of the ways we have mentioned.

Thank you.



continued from front page

with just little seeds of hope. A person's anxiety at having only a mustard seed of hope would be just like a builder being anxious that he was not going to have a completed house when all he could see was the foundation. A builder understands that the foundation is part of the process. So when you are thinking about Kingdom growth remember that along the way you will constantly have to battle feelings of inadequacy. *"Do not despise these small beginnings said the prophet Zechariah for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin"* (4:10, NLT). In the same way, when all we have is a little to work with we should rejoice because that is all it takes.

If Kingdom growth starts small it continues that way. There is a process. We have to become accustomed to "little by little" because it rarely happens any other way. *But you must not forget dear friends, that a day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day* (2 Peter 3:8, NLT). As we keep focused on having the whole tree we still must be able to enjoy the first sprouts of the seed, and then when the plant breaks through the ground we must celebrate this new movement. The growth process requires that we learn to celebrate small victories.

For example, I may have worked with a couple several weeks when I notice a small change. I will stop and have the couple talk about it. As I try to help them enjoy and "celebrate" this small victory the couple will usually be a little unnerved. The garment of hope feels uncomfortable and they don't know how to wear it so we talk for a moment about hope and its place in the life of the Christian.

Our flesh hates the "little by little" manner of thinking and in contrast the "you can have it now" mentality of modern culture is a great impediment to good spiritual growth. *"Be still in the presence of the Lord and wait patiently for him to act"* (Psalm 37:7). This is good advice for the Christian aspiring to become more like Christ. He is the only one who can

change us and He will never do it in our time. The scriptures say that when we "hunger and thirst for righteousness we will be satisfied". As we see what we don't have (maybe a lack of patience) and hunger and thirst for it God will cause it to grow in our hearts. We just have to keep hungering, thirsting and waiting. In any case we can't have what we want now and as we adjust to the slow pace of Kingdom growth we will actually move quicker along the path. This is what Luci Shaw called "growing accustomed to the grace of gradual illumination".

Finally, as you are moving towards the growth you desire you will not see it coming. It is an unseen process that in the moment that feels small (like yeast in bread). Philip Yancey says, "faith is believing in advance what will only make sense in reverse". So often the change is only noticeable as we continue along the path. If you look back two months ago you may not see much change but if you look back two years or ten years the growth is more recognizable. This is simply so that Jesus, and relationship with Him, can continue to be our motivating force. *"And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish"* (Heb 12:1-2) If we could see our growth in the moment we would rejoice in that and lose our need to cling to the Lord. He wants our heart and he has designed things so that we cannot get away from trusting Him. *"The righteous will live by faith"* (Heb 10:38).

So as you continue to walk this journey of faith remember that along the way you will never feel like you have that much; progress is made only little by little, and you won't even be able to see it happening. You will have to trust that God is working even when you can't see Him. Hopefully, knowing the landscape of the path that leads towards maturity will help us relax along the way.



PRAYER REQUESTS



For those of you who are orientated to towards intercessory prayer we are looking for a small group of people who will pray regularly for the ministry. One prerequisite would be having access to email so that we could periodically email prayer requests to those on our prayer team. If you would be interested in doing this please email us at dgbals@juno.com.

Pray for Gordon's transition, his family, Shades Valley Community Church.

Pray that the Lord will move to meet the needs mentioned on page two of the newsletter

Pray for the individuals and couples that Gordon & Julie meet with each day

Pray that Gordon & Dawn would be able to find a suitable insurance plan.

Pray for the ministry that during this time we would sharpen our vision and focus and remain committed to the things God has called us to.

With the move we will increase the size of our board. Please pray that we find board members who will support Daymark well and pray for God's spirit to be with the existing board members.



Allure of Hope

SEMINAR UPDATE

THE ALLURE OF HOPE SEMINAR WENT BETTER THAN WE COULD HAVE EXPECTED. WE HAD OVER 250 WOMEN COME TO THE WEEKEND AND THE RESPONSE WAS OVERWHELMINGLY POSITIVE. THANK YOU! WE WANTED TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF THE FEEDBACK WE RECEIVED FROM THE WOMEN WHO ATTENDED:

Jan has a beautiful gift from the Lord, and she shared that gift with us. Her words were like food to my soul and really helped to paint new pictures of myself in my mind. Her soft heart and the way she lets God love her give me hope for myself, that God can do that for me too!

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I think the thing that most affected me about Jan's seminar was Jan herself. She is what she writes about - winsome, at rest, strong and soft, engaged and engaging. Experiencing Jan made me desire to be more of who I was created to be rather than to copy her being who she was created to be. She made me hungry and thirsty for the freedom to love God with all that I am, while giving me hope that this is what God wants for me, too!

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I am very thankful for Jan's courage to share the gospel in a way that is different from the usual religious circles. I did not realize how I have killed my heart in a struggle for control, thinking it would bring me life. I have been behind prison walls falsely content with the known rather than living courageously with child like trust in my Heavenly Father. As a result of Jan's writings and teachings, I am slowly and cautiously taking steps forward in faith with an open heart.

Reflections From a Former Client

Dear Supporters of Daymark,

In their last letter, Daymark thanked you for your support on behalf of those who benefit from it. As one of those beneficiaries, I want to thank you myself. Without your help, Gordon would certainly not have been able to counsel me.

Because of what I have received, I long to be able to pay -- to somehow repay Gordon a little of what he has given me. As I thought about this, I had to laugh. Had I paid Gordon even more than his highest fee, had I paid him \$100 per visit from my first to my last, I would still owe him a debt that can never be paid. Since you made the counseling possible, I am as indebted to you. How does one repay those to whom one owes one's very soul?

In James 5:19-20 we read, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins." This is a summary of what Daymark does every day -- turn sinners (sinners who are Christians, like James' audience) from the error of our ways -- turn our souls from a path of death to life. The most amazing thing about the process is that I did not even know I was straying from the truth; I thought I was living a good Christian life. Gordon counseled me through a very long, dark period of trials and pain. In this time, I have moved from a path of trusting myself in the name of trusting God, towards a path of actually trusting God. I have begun to learn how to see my sin -- sin of which I was completely unaware -- and to lean on Christ's grace alone. In spite of several continuing trials, I have grown in faith, hope, and love. May these blessings continue to be poured out upon others through Daymark and your support!

about DAYMARK

Daymark Pastoral Counseling is a non-profit organization designed to make counseling and teaching resources accessible to individuals, couples, families, churches and para-church organizations. We are devoted to helping others experience the redemptive power of the Gospel.

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