

## Growing the New Life Within

Step Ten - Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

*Jesus told many stories such as this one: "A farmer went out to plant some seed. As he scattered it across his field, some fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The plants sprang up quickly, but they soon wilted beneath the hot sun and died because the roots had no nourishment in the shallow soil. Other seeds fell among thorns that shot up and choked out the tender blades. But some seeds fell on fertile soil and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted. Anyone who is willing to hear should listen and understand!"*

*The seed that fell on the hard path represents those who hear the Good News about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches the seed away from their hearts.*

As we move through our recovery, our attitudes can change. We long to live a productive life. We may be exposing ourselves to new ideas, even to the Bible, much more than we ever did before. Yet, as we examine ourselves in our personal inventory, we may not see the kind of growth we had hoped for. If this is true, we may need to ask whether our minds and emotions are truly receptive to the new thoughts and truths we're hearing. We can ask God to help us understand and overcome whatever is causing our resistance. As our hearts grow softer, we will begin to see positive spiritual growth.

*The rocky soil represents those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But like young plants in such soil, their roots don't go very deep. At first they get along fine, but they wilt as soon as they have problems or are persecuted because they believe the word.*

When we first began our recovery, we may have been surprised to find that God wasn't the enemy we'd thought him to be. Perhaps we were enthusiastic about our new relationship with God. We may have expected that when we turned our will and our life over to God, the struggle with our addictions would miraculously disappear. That sounded great! Finally there was an escape from the pain! But as we progressed in our recovery, we discovered that we still had to live life in the real world. We had access to God and his power, but we still had to fight the battles. This may have caused us to get discouraged about our relationship with God, causing our spiritual life to wilt. God never promised an easy life. If we're disappointed, it's because our expectations were unrealistic. Have we allowed life's troubles to destroy our budding faith? By continuing with our personal inventories, we allow the seeds of recovery to take root.

*The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the Good News, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares of this life and the lure of wealth, so no crop is produced.*

While growing in our recovery we may find that weeds crop up in our lives, threatening to choke out the good. We may find ourselves cynical and mistrusting; we become so self-centered that our relationships with others suffer. We may learn to take care of our own needs, which is healthy. But we may go beyond that to where we become greedy and demanding. We may be caught up with worries and fears of various kinds or lapse into bouts of self-pity. These types of weeds can choke out the good that's growing out of our recovery. As we continue to take personal inventory, we need to watch for the weeds that spring up in our lives. We may have had the chance to taste a better way of life. But once the crisis of confronting our addiction is past, there are new types of distractions that can choke out our spiritual life. We need to take a few moments each day to weed out the greed, sorry, fear, selfishness, cynicism, self-pity, and other negative tendencies that may take root in our hearts. Our support network can help us see when these "weeds" start inhibiting our growth. Continuing our personal inventory is like weeding a garden; it allows the good things to grow.

*The good soil represents the hearts of those who truly accept God's message and produce a huge harvest—thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted." (Matthew 13)*

Our initial goal was to stop the addictions that made our lives unmanageable. Once that was done, we may have experienced some confusion about what should come next. We may now wonder what life should be like with our addictions out of the way. Being free from our addictions may produce opportunities for us to put our talents and abilities to work. If we don't find worthwhile outlets for the new life growing in us, we may become frustrated. Jesus described how God's Word, received and understood, could take root in people's lives. Its growth there will cause them to develop into the productive people God created them to be. There's great potential within each of us! As we accept God's perspective on our lives and respond openly to him, new life will sprout in us. This new life will then find expression in our talents and abilities. There's a world of opportunities for growth. As we take our inventory, we need to check for signs of frustration about not using our talents and looking for ways to develop them.

### Questions for discussion and Reflection

1. How do we take a Step 10 inventory? What kinds of things do we look for in a Step 10 inventory?
2. According to the teachings of Jesus, what are priority items to consider in an inventory?
3. What do we do with what we discover?
4. How does relating to God over time change our understanding and our inventory taking?
5. What keeps us encouraged as we take regular Step 10's?
6. How does the gardening metaphor describe your growth in recovery?